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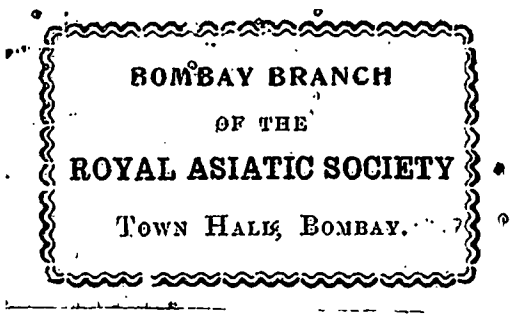

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FLORENTINE HISTORY.

Ma quell' ingrato popolo maligno
Che discese di Fiesole ab antico,
E tiene ancor del monte e del macigno.

DANTE, *Inferno*, Canto xv.

E come 'l volger del ciel della luna
Cuopre ed iscuopre i liti sanza posa,
Così far di Fiorenza la fortuna:
Perchè non dee parer mirabil cosa
Ciò ch' io dirò degli alti Fiorentini,
Onde la fama nel tempo è nascosa.

DANTE, *Paradiso*, Canto xvi.

FLORENTINE HISTORY,

FROM THE EARLIEST AUTHENTIC RECORDS

TO THE ACCESSION OF

FERDINAND THE THIRD,

GRAND DUKE OF TUSCANY.

14228

BY

HENRY EDWARD NAPIER,

Captain in the Royal Navy, F.R.S.

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ERRATA.

PAGE	LINE		FOR	READ
9	4,	Note	Cap. i°, Roncioni	Cap. i°—Roncioni, &c^a.
33	19,	„	Salviate	Salviati.
69	1,	„	Cavalcante	Cavalcanti.
99	2,	„	Corio, Parte v^a, p. 328	Corio, Parte v^a, folio 328.
102	3,	„	Do. do.	Do. do.
162	6,	„	Parte ii^a, p. 19.	Parte ii^a, folio 19.
58	2,	„	Corio, Parte iv°, p. 306	Corio, Parte iv^a, folio 306.
59	1,	„	Corio, Parte iv°, p. 315	Corio, Parte iv^a, folio 315.
215	3,	„	Giannoit. Republ^a. Fiorentina	Giannotti della Republ^a Fiorentina
345	Last line	„	Leonardo	Lionardo.
354	1,	„	Do.	Do.
475	15,	„	Carlo da Montona	Calo da Montone.

FLORENTINE HISTORY.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FROM A.D. 1402 TO A.D. 1415.

HAPPY are those climes that safe in their natural bulwarks only know war by name, by partial grief and public rejoicings, or the quiet payment of superfluous gold! Who see not their towns in flames, their fields laid waste, A.D. 1402. their sons murdered, their daughters violated, their old men weeping and their country ruined. Many are the benevolent but thoughtless hearts which had they ever felt the blast of war, would pause ere from the warm domestic hearth and the bosom of a happy family they lent their voice to carry desolation into peaceful, and far distant countries whose government but not the people are the offenders!

During the Milanese war the Florentine territory had been so devastated and bereft of people that the ground in most parts lay bare, untilled, untouched and untenanted; wherefore a decree went forth offering ten years' exemption from every public burden real and personal to all persons who would colonise the land, for without such restoratives none could work and live, so deep and universal was the mischief. The mountainous district round Firenzuola was utterly abandoned, and

the remnant of its people could only be enticed back by dint of exemptions and peculiar privileges: yet with the country in this state and enfeebled by the terrible effects of a plague in 1400, did the Florentines, as if in mockery of Heaven, again listen to ambition and again pant for conquest!* The death of Gian-Galeazzo Visconte did not therefore restore peace, but on the contrary gave fresh vigour to the war and new elasticity to the buoyant spirit of Florence whose citizens were loath to pass so fair an occasion of humbling the Visconti weakened as they now were by a divided inheritance and the ambition and mutual jealousy of a gang of unscrupulous condottieri. The eldest son Giovan-Maria Visconte inherited the duchy, properly so called, of Milan, with the addition of Bologna, Siena, and Perugia: Filippo-Maria succeeded to Pavia, Verona, Vicenza, and other places of inferior note, and Gabriele-Maria, an elder but illegitimate son, had Pisa for his portion. This division and consequent weakening of the state by a man of Gian-Galeazzo's sagacity in the midst of a formidable and expensive war occasioned general surprise; but a weak and young enemy in possession of Pisa was not unacceptable to Florence, and anticipated contentions between the mother, sons, ministers, and condottieri offered an alluring prospect to her ambition. The Florentine ambassadors had therefore orders to quit Venice without listening to any terms of peace, and those at Rome to confirm a treaty already concluded with Boniface IX. for the organisation of a league against Milan and the employment of their united forces for the recovery of Perugia.

Florence began by expelling Count Antonio del Palagio of the Guidi family, who under Milanese influence had been somewhat troublesome, from all his possessions in the Casentino; the principal towns, Palagio and Montemezzano, with his remaining territory were reduced into one community and under the name of Palagio Fiorentino annexed to the republic.

* S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xvii., pp. 895, 896.

Meanwhile the combined army and Perugian exiles invested that city under the pope's brother Giannello Marquis of La Marca: the place would have soon surrendered to Boniface, but as the besiegers insisted on a restoration of their exiled allies it obstinately refused, and held out until relieved by Otto Bonterzo from Milan with a strong detachment of cavalry. Giannello fled shamefully, but the exiles and Florentines under Cecco da San Severino maintained all their positions in the district although now too weak to continue the investment. During these events repeated inroads were made and retaliated on the Senese frontier so as to keep all that country in a state of tribulation, and the Pisan confines being similarly vexed by a new Milanese garrison, the year 1403 commenced with universal war in Tuscany *. Bartolommeo Valori gonfalonier of justice and the new-elected Balìà resolved to rid themselves of the evil by carrying hostilities into Lombardy and for this purpose Carlo Malatesta was induced to join the league of which Niccolò Marquis of Ferrara became general. Alberigo da Barbiano commanded the Florentines, and Cardinal Baldassare Cossa afterwards Pope John XXIII. was appointed legate in Romagna: Pandolfo Malatesta brother of Carlo commanded the Milanese forces at Siena and ravaged the Florentine territory, while Pisa occupied by an enemy paralysed all commerce in that quarter; wherefore Piombino was secured by treaty to facilitate the landing and safe-conduct of Florentine merchandise, and long-anticipated dissensions at Milan soon began to favour the views of that republic. Both Senese and Pisans were quickly repulsed and the combined army of Romagna made incursions into Lombardy: afterwards encamping near Bologna they expected a revolt, but every unquiet rumour was kept down by the vigilance of Facino Cane who with a strong force had thrown himself into that

A.D. 1403.

* Ammirato, Lib. xvii., p. 896.—Poggio, Lib. iv., p. 104.

city. The talents and wealth of Gian-Galeazzo had held elements together that when once relieved from his grasp began to crack and separate: the Guelphic party plotted and agitated; the military commanders were neither idle nor blind to their own interests; the ducal counsel was divided; all contending for the same object under pretence of their sovereign's welfare, and soon commenced a system of vengeance for former injuries, first secretly, then openly*. Francesco Barbavara, Gian-Galeazzo's chief minister and favourite, headed one party; Antonio Visconte, also a minister, another: the latter was favoured by the court nobility and people and after great tumults Francesco fled for refuge to the castle whence he ultimately escaped, but the city remained a long time in confusion. Disorder then spread to the provinces; town after town revolted, and all Lombardy became one mass of insurrection: Ugolino Cavalcabò first roused the Cremonese and finally obtained the lordship of their city; the Guelphs rose wildly in every quarter, and so savage was party hatred, that at Brescia as we are assured by both Corio and Ammirato, they not only outraged the women, not only dragged mothers, and children of every age from their concealment and holding by the hair butchered them like sheep and lambs, but actually exposed the flesh of their enemies for sale at the public shambles! It is not positively asserted that such food was eaten but so much is inferred; and such deeds does man dare to do when maddened by the pernicious spirit of political faction†! The Rossi agitated Parma, the Sacchi occupied Bellinzona; the Ruscioni seized on Como; the Suardi on Bergamo; the Scotti, Landi, Fontanesi and Fulgosi stirred up Placentia; Lodi Martesana, Soncino and many other towns were every one in arms, and all the land was mad with vengeance.

* Muratori Annali, Anno 1404.
† Poggio Bracciolini, Lib. iv., p. 104. —S. Ammirato, Stor. Lib. xvii., p. 900.—Corio Histor. Milan, Parte iv., p. 292.

Florentine arts and gold were blamed for this, and probably formed the match; but the combustibles already prepared in a malignant mass of faction had been only kept under by a dark and ponderous tyranny. The league took immediate advantage of this anarchy and invited by Rolando Rosso were preparing to cross the Po when the Duchess of Milan, apprehensive of consequences, commenced secret negotiations with the legate and Carlo Malatesta, which by the cession of Bologna and Perugia ended in a treaty; and this the Florentines were suddenly called upon to sign without even knowing that such a thing was in agitation. The Marquis of Ferrara, Alberigo da Barbiano, and Vanni Castellani the Florentine ambassador, were kept in equal ignorance; — the first took it quietly; the second flared up, threatened, made his own terms, and ultimately signed; but the last proudly and indignantly refused. Bologna was taken possession of in September; first by an insurrection of the citizens, then by the legate, who thus pretended to receive the city from them alone, independent of the Visconti. Florence thunderstruck at this breach of covenant made ineffectual remonstrances, but far from denying his error Baldassare Cossa audaciously attempted to excuse it by the advantage of having Bologna restored without bloodshed to the church. The pope after some dissimulation justified his legate and in answer to Florentine remonstrances bluntly avowed that meaning to live in peace he cared little for good faith. Perugia then voluntarily submitted to him and the league dissolved: Florence thus suddenly found herself deserted, and undecided whether she would continue the war alone or accept an unprofitable peace.

Carlo Malatesta irritated at this hesitation openly called her a *dovecot of knaves* who were endeavouring to put down all the gentlemen of Italy, but whose immediate and particular ambition was the conquest of Pisa to which he never would consent, nor allow any Ghibeline community to fall into

Guelphic hands. The Florentines were yet far from humbled although they had already spent 500,000 florins principally in the Papal service since Galeazzo's death; but their spirit and courage were at full sea, and Malatesta's conduct raised such a storm of anger as at once impelled them to more vigorous operations in order to prove their complete independence both of him and the treacherous pontiff.

Succours were accordingly despatched to Cavalcabò and the Rossi; the Cancellièri who had revolted and troubled Pistoia were tamed and forced to yield the pass of Sambuca; the Ubaldini, also driven into insurrection by the maladministration of Florentine governors, were curbed: Gabriello Maria Visconte had already disgusted the Pisans by his cruelty extortion and persecution of the Bergolini; Siena too showed symptoms of agitation and discontent, and the year 1404 opened with fresh expectations for Florence. The state of Lombardy was indeed deplorable; the ancient but long-suppressed enmity between Guelph and Ghibeline was again loose and raging with unheard-of fury and the land was steeped in blood: Vercelli and Noara were plundered; Pavia sacked, and along with Tortona Alexandria and many other places fell into the power of Facino Cane: Placentia a prey to internal discord and repeatedly the victim of a cruel rapacious soldiery suffered the combined horrors of civil hate and military licentiousness; so that, according to Poggio Bracciolini, an eye-witness, it was almost entirely depopulated: Brescia, that disgrace of humanity, fell into the hands of Pandolfo Malatesta; Ottobuon Terzo seized on Parma Placentia and Reggio; Verona revolted and set up the remnants of its ancient race, but their reign was brief and powerless; and thus the whole dukedom fell to pieces through evil administration, individual hate, and military aggrandisement. The young duke scarcely able to preserve even Milan from domestic enemies and the repeated threatenings of foreign invaders, was no longer an object of apprehension to Florence

A.D. 1404

who without concluding any formal peace seems to have gradually withdrawn all her forces from Lombardy*.

The new year brought with it a new Balia or war-council who failed in their first and secret attempt to surprise Pisa by blowing in an old walled gateway; yet this, coupled with his own unpopularity, so alarmed Gabriello that he at once placed himself under French protection through Jean le Meingre surnamed Boucicault then absolute and tyrannical ruler for the French monarch in Genoa†. This man glad of an opportunity to meddle with Tuscan politics immediately ordered Florence to refrain from molesting Pisa under the displeasure of Charles the Sixth; and as a security sequestered Florentine merchandise to the amount of 200,000 florins. At this startling notice Buonaccorso Pitti was instantly despatched to treat, but though subsequently supported by four other ambassadors had no success and returned unsatisfied to Florence; nor were any amends made until the Florentines granted a truce of four years' certain duration to Gabriello Visconte‡.

The change of magistracy this year was accompanied by a remarkable resolution, namely that in future no person under the rank of knight count or marquis should hold the office of Podestà or Captain of the People; nor were even the two latter dignities to be deemed sufficient unless at least half a century old, in such high estimation were these republican dignities then held in Italy! An attempt to make Siena revolt and come to friendly terms with Florence had failed in the preceding autumn, but so weakened was Milanese influence there that ambassadors were now sent to treat without the citizens even condescending to inform the governor, San Giorgio

* Poggio, Storia Fior., Lib. iv., pp. 106, 107, &c.—S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xvii., p. 902, &c. — Muratori, Anni 1403 and 1404.

† Cronaca di Buonaccorso Pitti, p. 75.

‡ Cronaca di Buonaccorso Pitti, p. 76. See also a spirited and characteristic letter on this subject from the Florentine Seignory to Charles VI. Published for the first time in 1836 by the indefatigable and enterprising Giuseppe Molini, at Florence, in his "*Documenti di Storia Italiana*," from MSS. in the Royal Library at Paris.

di Carreto, of the circumstance, and he voluntarily evacuated the town to prevent worse consequences. A treaty was therefore signed early in April by which the liberty of Siena was reëstablished, all conquests restored except Montepulciano the original cause of war, which now remained to Florence; the port of Talamone was again opened to her trade, and tranquillity once more began to dawn on that long-vexed frontier*.

The feudal chiefs who deserted Florence in her extremity had still to be punished, and Jacopo Salviati tells us that it was he who accomplished this after much hard fighting for nearly half a year, and with such effect as to leave scarcely a common hut in possession of the Ubertini of Val d'Ambra or the Counts of Bagno on the frontier of Romagna†. This quieted Tuscany, and about the same period ambassadors arrived from the antipope Benedict XIII. in their way to Rome under Florentine protection on a mission of peace about the ecclesiastical schism, but Boniface the Ninth's death in October abruptly terminated these conferences. After some tumults and bloodshed Innocent VI. succeeded; and under French patronage Benedict established himself in Genoa to further his own views and gain adherents in Italy; to this end he cheerfully united with Boucicault and the Genoese in a scheme for winning over Florence to their side by the sale of Pisa, her most coveted object.

Francesco da Carrara excited the jealousy of Venice by his occupation of Verona and Vicenza, and in despite of the earnest remonstrances of Florence that powerful state made war against him with such vigour that he was soon brought to extremities in Padua, his only remaining possession. This success of her rival and bitterest enemy roused the fears of Genoa to such a height as to overcome all similar feelings

* O. Malavolti, Storia di Siena, Parte iiª, Lib. x. p. 195.
† Cronaca di Jacopo Salviati, p. 221.

towards Florence which the acquisition of a seaport by that state had begun to excite, and secured her agreement to any measure tending to humble such a foe. Boucicault seems to have had his own views in the transaction as well as the others, but a desire of saving Francesco da Carrara was common to all; Florence was first sounded through a private merchant, and this brought Gino Capponi half officially to Genoa in order to feel his way: the business seemed to run smoothly when Gabriello conscious of his precarious tenure requested an interview with Maso degli Albizzi at Vico Pisano where his weakness and indecision proved too great to accomplish anything. This meeting however could not be concealed from the Pisans who believing themselves sacrificed seized their arms and drove Gabriello and his mother Maria Agnesina, by whom he was governed, into the citadel, where he held out until succoured from Genoa. The nature of Florentine negotiations were now changed; possession became uncertain but Gabriello, whose mother had just been killed by a fall, determined to sell the place: commissioners from Genoa together with Gino Capponi met him at Pietra Santa and after long discussion Pisa was sold to the Florentines for 200,000 florins with immediate possession of the citadel, and an understanding that Padua was to be relieved the moment the city itself should be reduced. There were also other conditions which fell with the citadel only a few days after it was occupied *. A.D. 1405.

The Pisans disdaining to be sold like oxen, and to their most detested enemy; suppressed for the moment all party differences and joined in the common cause. By force and stratagem they recovered their citadel and then sent ambas-

* Commentari di Gino Cappone, p. 254. "*Raccolta di Cronichette Antiche*," &c^a. (*Firenze* 1733.)—"Sei Capitoli (in verse) dell' Acquisto di Pisa fatto dai Fiorentini nel 1406 di Giovanni di Ser Piero (p. 250, Ar. Stor. Ital., vol. vi.) who says that 250,000 florins was the price. "*Che duo* C *con uno* L *e l'emme sopra, costò.*" Cap. i°, Roncioni, Istorie Pisane, Lib. xvi., p. 971, Ar. Stor. Ital.

sadors to Florence offering to repay that state all its expenses in exchange for peace and the restoration of Librafatta and Santa Maria in Castello which had already been taken possession of by the Florentines. The embassy was however abruptly dismissed and both sides prepared for a war which Florence was not afraid to undertake although she had already paid two millions and a half of gold since 1401, and was now obliged to create a new stock to meet the coming expense *. A close blockade by sea and land was resolved on; but this unexpected turn in the fortune of Pisa was the signal for Padua's fall and the ruin of Francesco da Carrara, while it permanently established the territorial power of Venice on the Continent. Confiding in Florentine assistance he rejected a treaty then on the point of signature and declared he would hold out to the last; his kinsman the Marquis of Ferrara had been forced by Venice not only to abandon his cause but take an active part against him; no Lombard ally stirred in his favour; Florence afar off, had too much on her hands to risk the anger of Venice at such a moment, and thus situated the Paduans themselves began to murmur: the Venetians terrified them with apprehensions of an assault and a gate was secretly opened on the seventeenth of November: Francesco and his son retired to the citadel and thence endeavoured to treat but in vain; he then repaired in person to the Venetian camp and while there both city and citadel were lost by treachery. Still listening to evil council he appeared in person at Venice, threw himself humbly on the mercy of a government that had never known mercy; was rebuked, imprisoned, and by the advice of his enemy del Vermo, who observed that "*dead men made no war*," was with his two sons Francesco and Jacopo finally strangled in prison. Two other sons were safe at Florence; one died in 1407, the other, in a vain attempt to recover his principality, was taken and decapitated

* S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xvii., p. 907.

at Venice in 1435, and thus terminated the chequered fortunes of that illustrious family *.

The acquisition of Pisa was a serious affair at Florence and great efforts were made to secure it; a mere licence to undertake this conquest had already cost much, and as yet no more ground was cleared for active operations: the remaining obstacles were Ladislaus king of Naples a young warlike and ambitious monarch on the one hand, and Ottobuon Terzo an able unemployed condottiere in possession of Parma on the other. Ladislaus then aiming at the subjugation of Rome, at that moment almost in anarchy from civil war, was quieted by a promise not to be thwarted in his enterprise, and Ottobuon Terzo was similarly paralysed by a large subsidy. These points settled, it was determined to invest Pisa so closely by sea and land that every hope of provisions or succour should be vain; the Florentine camp was accordingly pitched at *San Piero in Grado* on the river side a little below the town, under the Florentine commissioner Maso degli Albizzi, but more especially Gino Capponi whose commentaries furnish all the particulars of this memorable siege. A.D. 1406.

There were Florentines who would willingly have relinquished the enterprise, but strong temptations and the majority prevailed: it was popular as a commercial, a political, and a personal object; for Pisa had ever been a secure position for all the enemies of Florence, it was the great portal of her foreign trade, and the object of a bitter, long-enduring, and hereditary hatred. The Pisans' first care was to reconcile internal factions and concentrate all the various flashes of party spirit into one bright flame of patriotic indignation against a common foe: the Raspanti were then in power; many of the Bergolini with their leaders of the Gambacorti family in exile; all were recalled, and ancient quarrels lulled into present repose by the mere threatening of the storm: peace was sworn to by adverse chiefs upon

* S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xvii., p. 915.—Muratori, Anno 1405.

the sacramental bread, and made more solemn if not more binding, by a mixture of their blood with the consecrated wine. But Giovanni Gambacorta returned as full of vengeance as before and in contempt of every oath, after being elected captain of the people, put Giovanni Agnello to death, imprisoned Riniere de' Sacchi and many others, all chiefs of the rival faction, and afterwards secretly drowned most of them in the sea *.

The Pisans depended on Gambacorta's influence at Florence for an honourable peace and he attempted to make one; but that city would listen to no overtures except as from repentant rebels: her army was first commanded by Jacopo Salviati a Florentine citizen who after some useful and active service was superseded by Bertoldo degli Orsini: but this general showing more rapacity than soldiership displeased the Florentines and was ordered to resign his command to Obizzo da Monte Carelli. Active military operations had continued throughout the autumn of 1405, and when the camp was pitched before Pisa almost all its territory had been subdued; Vico Pisano, a strong fortress ten miles from Pisa on the right bank of the Arno, had been besieged and subsequently capitulated after a long investment; the baths of Monte Pisano though firmly fenced were also reduced, and nearly all the Pisan strongholds captured †. Provisions were intercepted on their voyage from Sicily; a squadron of Genoese galleys in Florentine pay blockaded Porto Pisano, and on each bank of the Arno was erected a redoubt connected together by a temporary bridge at the site of the Florentine encampment. A sudden flood, with timber launched from the town, broke through this barrier, and the Pisans in a sally attacked the still unfinished bastion now severed from the army; but Sforza da

* Gino Capponi, Commentari, p. 258. —Poggio Bracciolini, Libro iv., p. 111. —Tronci, Annali, vol. iv.—Sei Capitoli, di Gio. Ser Piero, cap. ii°.

† Jacopo Salviati Cronaca, p. 244-5. —Gino Capponi, Commentari, p. 258. —Capitoli di Giov. Ser Piero, cap. iii°, who asserts that one of the besieging engines called "*Briccole*" cast stones of 1500 lbs. Troy.

Cotignola then one of the Florentine leaders, with that skill and daring that made him afterwards so conspicuous, leaped into a small boat and with only two followers crossed the swollen stream. Tartaglia another commander, and a rival of Sforza's did the same, but as it would seem, more from anxiety to save some plundered cattle which were in jeopardy, than from pure glory. * Be that as it may both these chiefs were well known to the enemy whom they attacked almost single-handed, or only with a few workmen from the fort, spread a sudden panic amongst them, put the whole party to flight and saved the fortress *. The Pisans had no defenders but their own stout hearts and determined resolution, for the Florentines intercepted all supplies both of men and victuals by land and sea, and had encamped against them with fifteen hundred lances of three men and three horses each besides thirteen hundred infantry, all mercenaries; independent of native troops and the besieging army before Vico. A night assault was therefore commanded with promise of double pay, 100,000 florins, and the plunder of Pisa if captured.

Thus stimulated a bold escalade took place on the ninth of June and for some time the contest remained doubtful, but Pisan courage after some desperate struggles overcame every effort of the assailants; they were repulsed; one of their bravest champions fell, and his body was dragged in triumph through the beleaguered town. After this the growing rivalry of Sforza and Tartaglia began to trouble the camp so much that they were placed by order of the Seignory in distinct and distant commands with their separate force, for in those days armies were like a piece of patchwork, composed of many small independent bands, with but little subordination amongst any who were strong enough to be troublesome unless awed by high rank or the acknowledged fame of some able

* Tronci, Annali, vol. iv., p. 192.—G. Capponi, p. 162.—Capitoli di Gio. di Ser Piero, cap. iv., where Tartaglia's conduct only is mentioned.

chieftain *. Sforza himself acquired his surname by an audacious bearing towards Alberigo da Barbiano even when quite young and serving in a very subordinate military capacity with the army of that renowned commander †. Increasing scarcity produced an order for all useless mouths to quit the besieged town, but it was met by a counter-order from the camp to hang every male outcast, and cut away the hinder portions of female attire so as to expose their nakedness, and then after branding both cheeks with the impression of the Florentine lily to drive them back under the walls. This not having been found sufficient their noses were amputated in addition, and some male prisoners hanged under the ramparts within sight of the whole population. These were Gino Capponi's acts and were justified by existing usages; Giovanni Gambacorta's cruelty went no further, and seeing defence hopeless he offered to treat for a surrender. While negotiations were in progress the city showed sudden signs of rejoicing and soon after the Duke of Burgundy's arms and banners were everywhere displayed; then issued forth the royal herald in all the pomp of his time and office, to give the Florentines solemn warning that Pisa now belonged to his master and advise them to cease from any further molestation. No troops having been despatched to enforce this command the herald's hands were tied together and by the general's order he was tossed into the Arno: he escaped, and making his way to Florence received no sympathy; but an embassy was forthwith despatched to the duke and his cousin Charles VI. of France to explain and remon-

* G. Capponi, p. 164.

† In the distribution of some plunder he quarrelled with his comrades and the dispute was referred to Alberigo who gave it against him. On this he showed such anger and audacity that the general, who knew something of his bold overbearing temper, said to him in ridicule, "*Or vorrai tu Sforzare ancor me giovane come fai gli altri? Certo ben ti s'avviene il nome di Sforza.*" "What! dost want to force me too, young man, as thou dost others? Certes the name of Sforza well becomes thee."—This soon spread through the army and he ever after bore that name.—(*Scip. Ammirato*, Lib. xvii., p. 921.)

strate *. This adventure of course broke off all negotiations, but as famine was still eating on its silent way Gambacorta secretly renewed the negotiations with Gino Capponi and finally consented to a capitulation which in saving Pisa from all the horrors of a storm enriched the former chief, who not only fattened on his country's ruin but also sought to prolong his vengeance by a stipulation that all personal enemies of the Gambacorti should with all their living children, according to a list which he presented be declared public rebels, and so treated. He was moreover to have 50,000 florins, the government of Bagno, the citizenship of Florence, exemption for himself and family from all tolls and taxes, and be under the state's protection, besides several other advantages; and his brother was to be made Bishop of Florence, or that failing to have a pension instead. These and other private aggrandisements formed nearly all the articles of capitulation, those regarding the public comprising only a general amnesty, except for Gambacorta's enemies, and exemption from blood, plunder, fire, and devastation, both for the city and contado †.

The whole transaction was a secret, and on Gambacorta's part infamous: twenty hostages were to be delivered up to him as a pledge, but fearful of discovery he trusted to Florentine honour, and a military council was immediately assembled at a place called Casa Bianca on the Arno, first to reconcile Sforza and Tartaglia which was with difficulty accomplished; and then to settle the mode of taking possession of Pisa. In this the two rival captains differed, and each being well supported there was much confusion until Gino Capponi impatiently rose and thus shortly but sternly addressed them. "You have often declared that you would conquer Pisa by

* Jacopo Salviati, Cronaca, p. 249.—Gino Capponi, p. 267.—Capitoli di Gio. di Ser Piero, cap. iv., p. 264.

† Roncioni, Stor. Pisa, Lib. xvi., p. 972, and *note*.—S. Ammirato, Stor., Lib. xvii., p. 930.—Gio. di Ser. Piero, cap. v., p. 271.

" your personal valour and now when it is in our power to " open whichever of her gates we please, do you still hesitate, " O vile and worthless gentry, for fear of assassination? Are " you terrified at a besieged and starving people? No more " of this trifling: it is our pleasure that you enter by the " Gate of Saint Mark and each of you will give strict com- " mand and formal warning to your soldiers that no tumult " will be suffered; and all of you are now commanded on pain " of death to conduct yourselves as if marching through the " streets of Florence: you will moreover be held personally " answerable for the behaviour of your troops and servants, " therefore issue such orders as will insure prompt obedience " to our commands."

To this Franceschino della Mirandola replied: "You give " us rough and rigid orders! but if the Pisans chance to turn " on us, how are we then to act? If this happen will you not " then suffer us to repel them by every means? By fire and " by plunder?"

Gino, whose impatience would hardly suffer him to wait until this officer had finished, turned sharply towards him and with an angry countenance replied: "Franceschino, Frances- " chino, we will permit no robbery in any form; and if the " people turn on us or other accident occur, why we ourselves " will be there as well as thou and will command thee and all " the rest as to what may be expedient at the moment; where- " fore thou mayest spare thy labour, for what we have com- " manded shall surely be obeyed."

After this resolute conduct Gino repaired to Florence and explained all to the Seignory: he informed them that Pisa might be had with or without a capitulation for it could not hold out much longer. If by capitulation, he said, they would save an unhappy people from the multiplied horrors of a storm; they would receive an uninjured town; they would acquire merit with God and man, and they would perpetuate their

fame amongst distant nations. A council was immediately assembled and out of forty-seven secret votes there were forty-six black beans in favour of capitulation. Discontented at this slight want of unanimity the question was again called for by acclamation and a second ballot gave an unmodified decision for the more humane course of policy.

Gino Capponi and Bartolommeo Corbinelli were appointed public syndics to complete the transaction; hostages were to be sent by the eighth of October to Librafatta under the care of Sforza, and when everything was prepared Gambacorta doubtful of the citizens' indignation if the business transpired wished possession to be taken at night; but the cautious Florentines only occupied a gate until dawn of day when the whole army moved steadily forward with colours flying, and at sunrise appeared with glittering arms before the portal of Saint Mark where Giovanni Gambacorta anxiously awaited them. He held a verrettone or light dart in his hand and in presenting it to Gino Capponi said, "I present you with this "arrow as an emblem of the lordship of Pisa the most beau-"tiful jewel of which Italy can boast: it now remains for you "to command me in what I have further to execute *."

Gambacorta was immediately given in charge to Bernardo Cavalcanti one of the ten ministers of war, and the troops occupied the market-place whence they quietly paraded the streets in military array, at that time a very common mode of taking possession, while the whole population gazed in fear and wonder from their windows, few being aware of what had occurred so well concealed was the whole transaction. Nor did the soldiers marvel less at the pale emaciated faces that, fearful and doubting, gazed with famished looks upon their bravery: some more considerate soldiers had brought with them a few loaves which they threw to little children at the

* Gino Capponi, Commentari, p. 271. Gio. di Ser Piero, cap. v., who calls Corbinelli "*Parigi*." —S. Ammirato, Lib. xvii., p. 930.—

windows (for some faint gleams of a better nature glance from the worst of men and in the worst of times, as if still moved by its heavenly affinities) and no bird of prey, says Gino Capponi, was ever more rapid in darting on its quarry than these young creatures on the food thus thrown amongst them. Brothers and sisters fought for every piece and devoured it with a ravenousness that excited general astonishment. Gino ordered abundance of provisions to be supplied and crowds of every rank rushed madly to the banquet; many killed themselves by sudden repletion; the priors, and Gambacorta himself had long lived on linseed cakes; there was no more grain or flour, only a little sugar and cassia and three famished cows in the public stores: all else was eaten, even the very grass of the now desolate streets was dried and pulverized and kneaded into something resembling bread.

Gino then took possession of the public palace and commenced Florentine rule; but so mild was it and so unusual in these times during the first moments of conquest when horrors alone were expected, that people still remained in doubtful and anxious apprehension until reassured by the following speech addressed in the name of Florence to an assembly of civic authorities and the principal inhabitants of Pisa.

"Honourable citizens we know not whether *your* sins or "*our* merits have induced the Almighty to bestow on us the "lordship of this community which with vast expense and "solicitude we have acquired; but certes by your own dissen- "sions is this city reduced to such a condition that until Flo- "rence herself be diminished and enfeebled we shall ever be "ready and able to overcome you; and still we are animated "by every desire to preserve the conquest, with death and "extermination to all who dare oppose us. And when you "reflect on past events, on the many times that you have "endangered the liberty of our commonwealth, you must own

" that Pisa has always been the receptacle of whoever desired
" to enter Tuscany as an enemy. With the English company
" you stripped and flayed our country; you plotted with the
" Visconti of Milan and afforded them every assistance to
" injure and subdue us; nay, you even allowed yourselves to
" be sold to Gian-Galeazzo and voluntarily suffered even *his*
" tyranny for the mere pleasure of outraging Florence, and
" thus many more offences of a like nature might be enumerated
" but as they are well known to yourselves I will now pass
" them over. Yet bearing such wrongs fresh in our memory
" you will see that Florence could not have done less than she
" has done with a just regard to her own safety: nor can you
" be reasonably displeased with her sway, for our magnificent
" and illustrious seigniors have commanded that we govern
" with justice and impartiality until others are sent to relieve
" us, and of this you may already observe the effects; for
" having been conquered by a siege during which you were
" reduced to such extremity as to be compelled either to open
" your gates or die within three days of starvation, all of which
" was well known to us; we yet prefer the milder course and
" by making a present of 50,000 florins to Giovanni Gamba-
" corta for the delivery of your city have happily preserved it
" from storm and plunder. By refusing any capitulation we
" should still have had the town and our troops the booty;
" which as they assert could not in justice be denied them; and
" you have now seen that they entered more like priests than
" soldiers, so that not the slightest outrage as far as we know,
" has occurred to a single creature. Even we ourselves are
" forced to wonder that no scandal, no violence has broken out
" amongst the multitude of soldiers here assembled, but that
" everything has moved as calmly as a review in the streets of
" Florence; nay they have acted with even more circumspec-
" tion than they would have used in that capital; for had as
" many friars thus entered, more disorders would assuredly

" have been committed. But the principal object of my pre-
" sent mission is to comfort you with an assurance from our
" Seignory that not according to past deeds but as good and
" repentant children you will now be leniently treated. And
" we are further commanded to say that you and every other
" citizen may be assured, that notwithstanding any crimes, or
" excesses, or proclamations against individuals, whatever may
" have been the occasion, committed up to this day; and also
" in despite of any compact made with Giovanni Gambacorta
" about rebels, which he wished to be ratified by public treaty,
" and which compact cannot be justly observed as you will be
" duly advised of; if notwithstanding these things any of you
" have suffered wrong let him come and complain, for so we
" command; and you will see by the result that such punish-
" ment will follow as may be an example to all; neither is
" there an injury so trifling that the gibbets which we have set
" up in divers parts of the town, and the fetters, and the public
" executioners that stand ready in the market-place shall not be
" employed against those who disobey our commands. And we
" have moreover warned the captains and condottieri now pre-
" sent, that if any of their followers infringe these laws we will
" make *them* personally answerable for their people's conduct,
" and inflict on them the same punishment as if they were
" themselves the actual offenders; therefore be of good cheer
" and doubt nothing. Open all your shops and stores, attend
" to your usual affairs, trade and market securely, and have
" confidence in our protection. You will moreover do wisely
" to send a solemn deputation to the feet of our illustrious
" Seignory with full instructions to acknowledge their authority;
" for although they are already benignly disposed, still such a
" proceeding will tend to confirm them; and you can then also
" suggest the nature of that reform now become expedient
" for this city, and from which great benefit will assuredly
" arise."

When Gino had finished this firm and benevolent speech which shows the character of the man and most of his illustrious family, (a race of honest fame in Florentine history) and in which he so keenly exposed the perfidy of Gambacorta; Messer Bartolo Ciampolino of Piombino replied for his fellow-citizens in an oration somewhat too abject in many parts even for the fallen condition of his country; yet interesting as an exhibition of the state of misery and oppression from which conquest had just relieved them. Speaking from a scriptural text, as was still the custom; after acknowledging their own faults and lauding Florentine clemency; he declared, that if they had been previously culpable their late sufferings must have weaned them from former errors and taught them to look up to Florence for future benefits. "She has saved our city," he continues, "from "plunder and does not now seem disposed as many believe to "destroy but increase it as much as lies in her power, and at "least under *her* rule we shall not be starved or plundered as "in the days of Gabriello, who from you Messer Bartolommeo "da Scorno as I remember, took 25,000 florins under threats "of death if not instantly disbursed: nor, as in the time of "Giovanni Gambacorta befel you Messer Gherardo di Com-"pagno, who were reputed to be the most wealthy man not of "Pisa only but of all Italy; who without a crime were repeat-"edly tortured to extract money from your sufferings, which as "I believe entirely ruined you. I say nothing of the adulteries, "the massacres, and other enormities that were committed; I "say nothing of the deaths of our fellow-citizens, especially "of the Sacchi family in common with many others; I say "nothing of our starvation, for there is no need to tell in "words what is written in our faces and in the faces of our "families; but merely as an example I will relate what hap-"pened to Messer Bartolommeo del Scorno there before you "who is still reputed the richest citizen of Pisa; and what "he suffered, multitudes have also suffered. Hearing, this

" very morning, that every body might have bread, he sent " for a portion which he cast down before his family in the " great hall where more than thirty mouths were famish- " ing. At sight of this the children joyfully exclaimed, '*O* " *father, father, and shall we have dinner too!*' It was " because they had so little food that this new meal appeared a " miracle and they still expected a return of their former suf- " ferings. A few days before, the said Bartolommeo had pur- " chased a quarter of a bushel of wheat of eighteen pounds for " eighteen broad florins* nor could he get a grain more for his " money: so that we ought to thank the most high God who " has snatched us from such misery and given us just and " merciful rulers under whose equitable government we may " now hope for some tranquillity"†.

A parliament was next assembled and twenty ambassadors immediately despatched to Florence; they were followed by Gambacorta and two hundred citizens of note all of whom were unexpectedly retained as hostages for two years until a new citadel was erected. Gino Capponi who had gained golden opinions through his uncommon vigilance and integrity, directed, as it was by great talents and softened by more humanity than was then common in the treatment of enemies, became the first governor of Pisa; and thus was the October of 1406 rendered famous in Florentine story by the lamentable fall of an ancient rival and sometime friend, the willing host of every enemy and a detested yet indispensable neighbour‡. Anxiety now ceased in Florence; an extended domain was added to the republican territory; a sea-port secured for trade; stronger protection for

* It appears by this that the Pisan *Staio* or bushel of wheat weighed 72 lbs. Troy, when that of Florence was but 52 lbs. The Fiorino largo or broad florin was about ⅓ more than the Fiorino di Suggello, or sealed florin for trading. (Vide *Fiorino d'Oro Illustrato*, cap. xviii., p. 231.)

† Gino Capponi, Comment., p. 274.

‡ The cost of this enterprise was from first to last so great that Corio tells us the Florentines called Pisa, in allusion to their public stocks—"*Il Monte della Paura.*" "The Mount of Terror." (Parte iv^{a}, p. 295.)

friends, and a new and distant barrier against enemies. Solemn religious processions and public rejoicings followed this grand catastrophe; the sacred picture of Madonna dell' Impruneta was carried in pomp to Florence; the nation bowed before it, and the ninth of October was set apart for ever as a day of universal festivity to commemorate so important a conquest*.

It was not so in Pisa: there it is true, hunger and physical sufferings were mitigated or removed; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Many noble families after the loss of freedom with five hundred years of independence and accumulated glory disdained both ease and safety! They saw the mournful shadows of past ages glide before them and wave a long adieu to the scenes of departed greatness! Pisa the free and flourishing had been their beloved country; Pisa the slave of Florence became hateful; their former tyrants, however odious, were their own; their present rulers, however merciful, were their most detested enemies, and worse; their conquerors! Even the redeeming attribute of mercy did not long survive to soften the horrors of subjection†, and numbers emigrated to other climes or followed the career of arms, in which they could still lift the sword and spear against their country's

* Gino Capponi, Commentari, p. 269, &c., and *passim*.—Poggio Bracciolini, Stor. Fior., Lib. iv., p. 108, &c^a.—S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xvii., p. 925, &c^a.—Domen. Buoninsegni, Lib. iv., p. 797.—Tronci, Annali Pisani, vol. iv., which finishes his Annals.—Gio. di Ser Piero, Capitolo vi.

† By a letter dated 14th January, 1431, from the Balia of the Ten of War to Averardo de' Medici, then Florentine commissary in Pisa, we learn the spirit in which this poor city was treated by Florence.—"Here it is held by all that the principal and most active system that can be recommended for the security of that city (Pisa), would be to empty it of citizens and other Pisan inhabitants; and we have so many times written about this to the Captain of the People there that we are tired. His last reply to us was, that the men-at-arms prevented him, for he was not in favour with their captain. We will that thou dost now support him and become acquainted with everything; and let your means be by the use of every harshness (*asprezza*) and every cruelty, for we know that every other medicine will come to little. They (*the Florentines*) have confidence in and encourage thee to be very quick in execution; for anything more grateful to this people could not be accomplished." — (*Fabroni, Magni Cosmi Medicei Vita*, vol. ii°, p. 8, 4° Ed.)

foes*. Thenceforth the name of Pisa, except for one short, eventful and glorious moment, appears no more in Tuscan history except as a subject province.

During the last century Florence had generally fought for freedom, independence, and the balance of Italian power; but since Gian-Galeazzo's death for aggrandisement alone: neither the war of Lucca nor that in which Arezzo fell were begun for the nobler object, and peace might have well been made at Visconte's death. Great anxiety was now removed, and the value of property and public credit were rapidly and wonderfully augmented, according to Dati, full one-fourth, by the increased facility of trade and general security: but further than this it may be doubted whether any real permanent and political strength were gained by the annexation of a feverish weak and uncongenial state which, like those birds that die of vexation when encaged, never could adjust its shoulders to the yoke and shook it off on the first favourable opportunity†. When Gherardo d'Appiano refusing all Florentine advances sold Pisa to the Duke of Milan in 1399 for 300,000 florins, the inhabitants rejoiced in the act through sheer enmity to Florence which they fully expected would soon fall under that prince's dominion, and Lucca, Siena, and almost all her Tuscan neighbours joined in this feeling against her and of amity with Visconte; some because they liked what was supposed to be the winning side; but most from jealousy and hatred of Florentine wealth and ascendancy. How a few fleeting years had changed everything but enmity! Visconte was no more; his dominions were ruined, his people butchered, his revenues plundered, his sons despoiled, his armies defeated, his generals faithless, his friends false, and his children's inheritance, which cost so much blood and crime, clutched by a set of powerful and remorseless ruffians! Lucca was a cypher; Siena humbled; and Pisa, the once mighty Pisa! the

* Sismondi, vol. vi., cap. lx. † Goro Dati, Storia di Firenze, p. 131.

focus of hate and war! was now the vanquished thrall of that very people whose ruin she then so intensely coveted! The wheel of fortune had changed, and its downward turn had brought adverse points into new and singular opposition.

Florence after this effort would willingly have reposed; she required leisure to consolidate her newly-acquired dominion and lost no time in regulating the civil and military occupation of the country, but long rest was denied her. Fifteen hundred lances composed the garrison of Pisa; troops were distributed throughout the territory; a board of ten commissioners was ordered to superintend the rebuilding of the ancient citadel as well as all other fortifications necessary throughout the Pisan state. Governors were distributed over the land with extensive and unusual authority and a Florentince prelate of the Adimari family became archbishop of the conquered city. Thus was completed the subjugation of this ancient and once powerful commonwealth. By the valour of her arms she had in early times conquered both Corsica and Sardinia from the Saracens; she had been long mistress of Elba and the Tuscan Sea; had spread her commerce far and wide, and possessed vast power and influence in the Levant especially at Acre, in those days a city of great wealth and importance; but, after repeated victories over Genoa, fortune at length failed and the fatal battle of Meloria ultimately crushed her as a nation.

Florence was soon engaged in fresh troubles, and during the siege of Pisa had also the misfortune to lose one of her most useful and distinguished ministers in the celebrated Coluccio Salutati; he died on the fourth of May and was interred with great magnificence at the public charge, but whether crowned or not with the laurel wreath as intended is now uncertain. As a powerful organ of the public voice he was invaluable and his classic pen would have materially assisted all subsequent negotiations *.

* Boninsegni, Historie Fiorent., Lib. iv., p. 798.

The schism, which commenced with Pope Urban VI. in 1378, still divided the church notwithstanding every effort to unite antagonist interests: the death of Boniface IX. in 1404 had abruptly broken off negotiations with Benedict XIII. a cunning and ambitious churchman, who however found his equals in most of the legitimate pontiffs. Various and successive attempts had long been making to reconcile the church with itself both by kings and commonwealths; and even some cardinals of both courts exerted themselves to heal the wound, but all in vain because the promises made in conclave were forgotten on the throne and a popedom once grasped was not so easily relinquished. Innocent VII. succeeded Boniface IX. in 1404 and for a while remained quiet at Rome and willing to continue so, but showed no signs of exerting himself to heal the schism much less of abdicating for a purpose so holy; he had mischievous relations too, and the Romans became impatient angry and ready for sedition. They were encouraged by Giovanni Colonna and King Ladislaus of Naples, a young unscrupulous and ambitious monarch whose eye was fixed on Rome as a certain conquest: tumults soon began; treachery, murder, and promiscuous slaughters as usual stained the scene, and Pope Innocent ultimately fled for safety to Viterbo. Ladislaus made an attempt on Rome and occupied the castle of Saint Angelo; Innocent soon after returned, made his peace with the king, and died on the sixth of November 1406. Gregory XII. succeeded, with long promises and short performance as regarded the schism, yet so animated a correspondence was maintained between the rival priests that for some time the world began to hope, and was deceived *.

A.D. 1407.

Savona was named as a meeting-place but this was subsequently changed; Gregory proceeded to Siena, and even to Lucca in 1408; Benedict to Savona, Spezia and Protovenere; both then halted: one would not stir from

A.D. 1408.

* Muratori, Annali, Anni 1405, 1406, 1407.

dry land, the other would not quit the water, and neither were sincere. Pietra Santa, Carrara, Lavenza, Motrone, Leghorn and Pisa were successively proposed for a conference; but the object of both pontiffs was deceit, not reconciliation; for this both must have abdicated, and neither was disposed to such humility. Benedict was the more active: with the help of Boucicault he despatched eleven galleys to surprise Rome but Ladislaus had already occupied that city on the sixteenth of April 1408 *. It was a decisive stroke and dealt, as is supposed, with Gregory's concurrence on purpose to disturb the negotiations: besides which he wanted to make a promotion of cardinals, against his promise, and this alarmed the college as it proved his insincerity about resigning the tiara, if required for the church's welfare. The measure was strongly opposed; seven cardinals disgusted with his conduct withdrew from court and retired to Pisa; they were countenanced by Florence and finally appealed to a future pope and a general council. This rendered Gregory uneasy at Lucca; he wrote to Ladislaus for an escort of Neapolitan troops and the latter glad to prevent the council by gaining a military footing in Tuscany demanded safe conduct from Florence for seven hundred lances and provision for himself and soldiers. The Seignory was alarmed; ambassadors were sent to Rome, and the request was finally refused: Ladislaus gave them their choice, either to comply, or manage so that the pope should withdraw his requisition which he as a feudatory of the church was bound to obey; or else expect two thousand hostile lances and fifteen hundred infantry before the gates of Florence. He then departed for Naples while the Florentines made an arrangement with Gregory which relieved them from this dilemma: and the Pope quitted Lucca under their escort on the fourteenth of July; on the seventeenth he

* Buoninsegni, Storia, Lib. iv., p. 807.—Giannone, Storia Civile, Lib. xxiv., cap. vi., p. 322.—Scip. Ammirato, Lib. xvii., p. 941.

reached Siena where thinking himself safe from the rebellious cardinals the Florentine guard was dismissed and the court established *.

Florence meanwhile allowed a conference to be held at Pisa where several cardinals of both parties had already assembled, and urged Gregory to fulfil the oath he had so solemnly taken to reunite the church, by now attending the council at Pisa. But the pontiff was inflexible and his antagonist equally angry, for both now saw themselves forsaken by many cardinals who wished to close the schism, wherefore both immediately filled up the vacancies thus occasioned.

The Pisan council on the contrary wrote to every Christian court complaining that the pontiffs wished to continue the schism and simultaneously urged both the latter to resign as they had promised previous to their assumption †.

The two popes on the other hand warned all Christian potentates against attending to the cardinals at Pisa, and Gregory tired of these repeated exhortations removed to Rimini, for Bologna had been wrested from him by Cardinal Cossa who also offered aid to Florence against Ladislaus, to whom the former had already sold the Romans ‡.

In this state of affairs each pontiff strove to justify his own conduct and blame his rival: Gregory summoned a general council at Aquileja or at Rimini; Benedict another near Perpignan, and the discontented cardinals a third at Pisa. To the latter King Ladislaus was by a joint embassy from Florence and the cardinals urged to send the Neapolitan prelates, but having already purchased Rome, Bologna, Faenza, Forli, and Perugia as far as Pope Gregory's power over them

* Muratori, Annali 1408.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xvii., p. 943.—Giuseppe M. Mecatti, Storia Cronologica di Firenze, vol. i., p. 350.—Poggio, Lib. iv., p. 119.

† Giannone, Storia Civile di Napoli; Lib. xxiv., cap. vi., p. 330.

‡ Muratori, An. 1408.—Poggio, Lib. iv., p. 120.—Ammirato, Lib. xvii., p. 944.

extended, his policy was to maintain that pontiff's authority at all hazards, not only on this account but because he had a formidable rival for the throne of Naples itself in young Louis of Anjou whose father was the rightful heir of that monarchy by Queen Giovanna's testament *.

The Florentines in concert with Boucicault governor of Genoa had determined to withdraw their obedience from Pope Gregory XII. if he did not fulfil his inaugural engagement by trying everything, even to abdication for the purpose of uniting the church: but as this was a serious enterprise the Seignory assembled a parliament and receiving plenary power from the people to act according to their discretion, proceeded with great solemnity. A meeting was summoned of all the doctors in civil and canon law; all the theologists, abbots, priors, and every other learned civilian of Florence to the number of one hundred and twenty, for the due consideration of this question; and after three days' discussion Gregory was pronounced heretical and schismatic; and as an enemy and corruptor of the Christian faith well worthy of being deposed. A.D. 1409.

Thus sanctioned the Seignory sent one more invitation to implore his presence at the council of Pisa and on his refusal formally withdrew their obedience and allowed the cardinals to open that assembly on the 25th of February 1409 †. Thus also ended their friendship with Ladislaus, but this had long been waning, for his ambition was too dangerous, his objects the conquest of Italy and the acquisition of the empire; he had already taken "*Aut Cæsar aut nihil*" as his motto, with the lofty-sounding title of King of Rome which neither Goth, Lombard, nor Frank from fear or reverence of the Eastern emperors had ever ventured to assume. His game was to keep the church weak by discord and division while he made

* Giannone, Lib. xxiv., cap. vi.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xvii., p. 946.

† S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xvii., p. 945.

Gregory a convenient instrument of ambition. Ambassadors were sent to him by the Florentines to ascertain his wishes which were briefly given; that they should join him, drive the cardinals from their territory and break up the council: all these, being against their own interest and for the manifest aggrandisement of Ladislaus, were promptly refused and they were made more confident from an expectation that any new pope would instantly attempt to recover the church property which Gregory had so unlawfully sold, and thus augment their power of resistance *.

Ladislaus became enraged at this short and resolute answer but was firmly withstood by Bartolommeo Valori who told him that up to that time the Florentines had defended their liberty against many emperors and tyrants who had done their utmost to reduce them to slavery; nor had they alone defended but increased, their dominion and power, wherefore they would in the present instance follow that course which was deemed most useful and would defend themselves with at least as much vigour as they were attacked; perhaps a little more. On this Ladislaus became more violent, and demanded, "With what troops they could oppose him seeing that he had already engaged most of the Italian generals?" "*With yours*" rejoined Valori boldly; and by these words left a strong impression of fear on the king's mind lest he should be deserted by his captains, which in fact was subsequently realised †.

This resolute aspect however indicated no diminished alarm in Florence, which had but three hundred and ninety-six lances in pay, half of whom were despatched to Siena and a close alliance concluded with Cardinal Cossa legate of Bologna: two ambassadors were sent to confirm Siena in her faith, and with two more from that state repaired to the royal camp

* Muratori Annali, Anno 1409.—Pietro Giannone, Istoria Civile di Napoli, Lib. xxiv., cap. vi., p. 332.—Poggio Bracciolini, Lib. iv., p. 121.—Sismondi, vol. vi., cap. lxi.

† Poggio Bracciolini, Lib. iv., p. 120.

near the river Paglia northward of Aquapendente. This of course was a vain effort to turn aside the storm nor did the king's embassies to Siena and Florence produce more peaceful consequences: the former was ravaged up to its very gates, but held firm and thus saved Florence; several towns were then unsuccessfully attacked and a sudden attempt was finally made on Arezzo; yet all remained faithful although the king's army amounted to between fourteen and eighteen thousand men besides a strong squadron which alarmed the coast, and every preparation was made for vigorous war. Malatesta of Pesaro the Florentine general had arrived near Arezzo with a large body of troops, and Ladislaus it does not appear why, moved on towards Cortona ravaging the country without any serious attempt, so that he was called in derision "*Re Guastagrano*" or "*King Spoil the Corn;*" but he finally got possession of Cortona by treachery on the thirtieth of June*. Meanwhile the Pisan council consisting of twenty-four cardinals, three patriarchs, a hundred and eighty bishops and archbishops, more than three hundred abbots, two hundred and eighty-two masters in theology, with a multitude of ambassadors from various Christian states, condemned Gregory XII. and Benedict XIII. to the flames as schismatics and heretics, and on the twenty-sixth of June proclaimed Piero di Candia as the only true Vicar of Christ and Pontiff of God's Church under the name of Alexander the Fifth. This gave great alarm to Ladislaus who feared what afterwards occurred, a union of the new pope and the Florentines; nor was his alarm diminished by the intelligence of a fresh league between them, the legate of Bologna, Siena, and his rival the young duke of Anjou, whose ambassadors were then at Pisa, by which a large force was to be moved both by land and sea against him. The two other popes also held their councils and were each acknowledged by many states of Christendom so that three adverse pontiffs all

* Jacopo Salviati, Cronaca, pp. 313, 314, 315, &c.

Vicars of Christ and all infallible, yet each denouncing the others as schismatic and heretical, shocked while they ruled the Christian world*.

The Florentines having again failed in an attempted reconciliation with Ladislaus through the mediation of Venice, hurried on the Duke of Anjou's preparations and soon saw that prince arrive with five galleys and five or six hundred lances at Pisa, where he was immediately acknowledged by the pope as King of Sicily and Jerusalem, and created Gonfalonier of the Church: the league with Cardinal Cossa was at the same time confirmed by Alexander; and a confederate army, the bulk of which was Florentine, of about thirteen thousand men of all arms commanded by Malatesta di Pesaro, Sforza, and Braccio da Montone, prepared to march against Rome in different directions†. Ladislaus after distributing his troops throughout Tuscany, La Marca, and other places in the ecclesiastical states, had returned home to make fresh preparations against this formidable array, nor was he, though scoffed for his Tuscan exploits, at all to be despised; he had the reputation of an able and experienced captain; brave, fierce, and resolute; patient and vigilant; despising fatigue and danger, and deeply imbued with the love of military glory. He had subdued his own rebellious barons and enlarged his state, and checked at no means for this; whether by the sale of royal lands or offices, or titles of nobility; not excepting that of knighthood which he contemned; or of forced contributions; and even on the slightest suspicion, the seizure of his subjects' property: and thus he accumulated money for his enterprises: besides this he was faithless, irreligious, libidinous, and barbarously cruel; yet could repress every passion at the voice of policy. Tired of his wife the beautiful and virtuous

* Muratori, Anno 1409.—Giannone, Lib. xxiv., cap. vi.—S. Ammirato, Storia Fior., Lib. xvii., p. 949.

† Jacopo Salviati, Cronaca, pp. 315, 321.

Constance of Chiaramonte he secretly procured a divorce from Gregory XII. and had the cruelty to cause the first intimation of it to reach her from the pulpit in face of an astonished and indignant congregation. He then approached the unhappy queen, publicly took the marriage ring from her finger, confined her in a convent, and subsequently gave her in marriage to Andrea di Capua son of the Count of Altavilla. She had borne her misfortunes with exemplary dignity and virtue but never would acknowledge the divorce, and when on horseback and about to depart for Capua after the marriage ceremony, she turned to Andrea and in presence of an immense multitude of nobles and people assembled to do her honour, said aloud, "*Andrea di Capua, thou mayest hold thyself the most fortunate* "*gentleman of this kingdom since thou hast for thy concubine* "*the legitimate wife of King Ladislaus thy lord.*"

Such was the enemy that Florentines had now to combat. Their army soon assembled near Monte Pulciano to the number of about nine thousand horse, and on the eighteenth of September were before Orvieto, Jacopo Salviate and Veri Guadagni being the commissaries; for although the army was nominally confederate the greater part was paid by Florence at the rate of about 20,000 florins a month *. The Conte di Troia who commanded for Ladislaus seeing this formidable movement assembled all his forces and marched to the defence of Rome while the allies were detained before Orvieto negotiating for provisions, to procure which they were forced to engage Paulo Orsini who commanded in Rome for Ladislaus, with six hundred lances besides infantry, at fourteen florins and a third for each lance monthly, and paying for sixty more than he was obliged to supply, his own salary being 600 florins a month. After this Orvieto submitted to the church; Monte Fiascone

* S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xviii., p. 951, &c.—Pietro Giannone, Lib. xxiv., cap. v. and viii., pp. 317, 352.—Jacopo Salviati, p. 324.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 953.

followed and Viterbo opened its gates; at Rome Orsini joined the allies and with Braccio da Montone entered that city by Borgo San Piero followed by all the army, but could not succeed in forcing the bridge of Saint Angelo which was strongly fortified and gallantly defended. Ladislaus had more than four thousand horse in Rome and the people headed by Colonna were against the allies from hatred to Paulo Orsini, so that Malatesta after some delay and a slight but unsuccessful change in his operations put the troops into winter quarters, and Louis returning to France the campaign finished, but after an expense to the republic of 400,000 florins in seven months besides the capture of 200,000 florins' worth of Florentine merchandise by the enemy's cruisers *. Malatesta however who remained in the Campagna with the Florentines was far from idle either as a general or negotiator and succeeded in bribing a Roman citizen of some distinction, called Lello Nencio, to commence a tumult at a time agreed upon when he would be supported by Paulo Orsini, who still held the Borgo and castle of Saint Angelo, on one side; and by the Florentine army on the other: Giano Colonna and the Conte di Troia became suspicious of the plot and Malatesta withdrew to lull them: the former attacked Orsini with all their force and were repulsed; on which Nello offered in the name of the people to deliver Rome into the hands of the latter and so alarmed the Neapolitan that both he and Colonna evacuated the city. The people then unanimously declared for Pope Alexander, tore down the arms of Gregory and Ladislaus, and returned to their allegiance on the last day of December 1409. Malatesta appeared on the first of January and after some parley was allowed to enter with his whole army, and the Florentine lily for the first time was seen triumphantly floating on the Forum of ancient Rome †.

A.D. 1410.

* Jacopo Salviati, Cronaca, pp. 317, 318, &c.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 954.
† Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xviii., p. 955.

This caused as great rejoicing at Florence as grief to Ladislaus, for it was followed by the rapid submission of Ostia, Tivoli, and the neighbouring towns as well as of all the Roman barons except Colonna and his family. The king sent ambassadors to negotiate a peace but the Florentine conditions were too hard: Alexander V. was now at Pistoia beset by the Florentines on one side to move at once towards Rome, and by Cossa on the other to repair to Bologna and first tranquillise Romagna: the latter succeeded; Alexander went to Bologna, received a deputation from Rome, was taken ill, and died on the third of May with strong suspicions of having been poisoned by Cardinal Cossa who succeeded him under the name of Giovanni XXIII. *.

This pope being a bitter enemy of Ladislaus joined heartily in the war, and Louis of Anjou arriving soon after with a strong squadron of galleys which acted against the now combined forces of Genoa and Naples, the war was renewed rather ominously by a defeat of the Provençal squadron †. In a short time money began to fail, Louis was forced to borrow from the pope and Florence; Sforza became suspected, and the other captains inactive for want of pay; so that Salviati and Buonaccorso Pitti were sent to arrange matters and finally succeeded in enabling the Duke of Anjou to leave Siena and proceed to Rome where he began his preparations for an invasion of Naples.

In the meantime Ladislaus became more alarmed and Florence less able to support the war; overtures of peace were made by the former and accepted: the treaty was completed on the seventh of January 1411, by which Ladislaus renounced all interference with Rome or the states north of it except Perugia which he still held; Cortona, Pierli, and Mercatale were to be sold to Florence for 60,000 florins, A.D. 1411.

* Muratori, Anno 1410 Platina calls him John XXII.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 956.
† Jacopo Salviati, Cronaca, p. 339.

and her captured merchandise restored. These were the principal conditions but they were still to remain inoperative until the term of the Florentine league with Louis of Anjou had expired. The latter finding himself without money or support had retired to Prato and though used as a tool by the Florentines acquiesced with a good grace and made his mind up to the consequence, after which he joined the pontiff at Bologna *.

Drained and weakened by their long struggles, for Florence had with but little intermission been almost one-and-twenty years at war, the Florentines determined to fetter their own future movements as closely as human intercourse would permit, and cause war to be at least slowly and cautiously undertaken though it were ultimately inevitable. They had attempted this before but present passions overcome past resolutions and cases are ever occurring that apparently but delusively justify a departure as well from the wisest and strictest laws as from the most virtuous intentions. Under the existing pressure a decree passed all the councils that prohibited any hostilities beyond the state, as well as any league or confederacy where the public had no jurisdiction: also the receiving of any state or chieftain under their protection by what was called "*Raccomendazione*," which was in fact purchased by a species of vassalage for stipulated periods; also the acquisition of any town or fortress by the community and the increase of the standing army of mercenaries to more than five hundred lances and fifteen hundred infantry between crossbow-men and *Pavesi* or heavy-armed foot. These and many other provisions already made and as often broken were again confirmed and no measure contrary to them could now be passed unless it were first proposed and carried in a new council of two hundred citizens and thence named the "*Council of Two Hundred.*" To form this council a purse was made up for each quarter of the

* Poggio, Lib. iv., p. 127.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 961.

city, in which was contained the names of all who had passed the scrutiny or who had been drawn for the principal state dignities, provided they were thirty years of age and that there were not already three members elected of the same family *.

The manner of selection was probably that established for the priors and Buonomini after the plague of 1348. Fifty waxen balls were placed in the purse each containing a slip of parchment with the names of eight priors, six taken amongst the unoccupied citizens and seven superior arts; and two from the fourteen inferior trades: besides this there was another purse of "*Spicciolati*" or the loose names of those who had not sufficient votes for election to the above offices; and out of this were supplied the names of any candidates that might be required to replace those that happened to have the Divieto. The gonfaloniers of justice had a separate purse for each quarter †. In this council which was renewed half-yearly, only those measures could be proposed that had already been discussed and passed by two-thirds of the Seignory: after having passed these two councils they were to go to the council of a hundred and thirty-one, which was composed of the Seignory and colleges; the captains of the Party Guelph; the ten of liberty; the six councillors of commerce; the twenty-one consuls of the arts, and forty-eight other citizens. The next stage was the council of the people, and finally that of the community before any measure relating to war became valid for execution ‡.

This law was deemed wise; it received much praise and lasted a while, until again undermined and corrupted by the arts, knavery, and ambition of aspiring citizens. The rule of the Albizzi faction though able and partially disguised, was absolute to a degree quite inconsistent with liberty; and whatever were the faults of Cosimo de' Medici, in despotic acts there was little

* S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xviii., p. 961.

† Cronaca di Donato Velluti, p. 85.

‡ Memorie della Città di Firenze da Domenico Boninsegni, dall' Anno 1410 al 1460, Lib. i°, p. 2.—S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xviii., p. 961.

to choose between them. In the gonfaloniership of Vannozzo Serragli who entered on his office in November 1411, he and his colleagues wishing to carry a tax which both the council of the people and that of the community had rejected, imprisoned the members of both until through mere exhaustion they were forced to pass the bill. This tax was afterwards called the "*Dispiacente*" or the Displeasing, and Serragli's conduct as Ammirato remarks was much blamed by;—"*those who had no part in the government.*" At this time also either for a real or supposed conspiracy the whole race of the Alberti were banished and one of them decapitated as has been already mentioned. Another conspiracy was also detected which cost a few heads and the captivity of a priest with whose blood the government was unwilling to stain its hands: a third soon followed and more heads fell; for Florence when at peace without was never long quiet within; but a dispute with Genoa once more occupied the public attention *. The discord of that turbulent commonwealth had driven it under French protection and Boucicault in the name of France ruled there for several years with a rod of iron: treating Genoa almost as a conquered province until her citizens became impatient of the yoke. In 1409, this chief interfered with Milanese politics and moved at the head of some soldiers nominally to succour Gian-Maria Visconte, but really to usurp the dukedom; while thus employed Facino Cane and Theodore Marquis of Monferrato appeared before the gates of Genoa from different directions, and both being at war with Boucicault soon produced a revolt: the Lieutenant-Governor and French garrison were massacred and the Marquis of Monferrato made captain of the Genoese republic with ducal power, on the sixth of September 1409 †.

A.D. 1412.

This led to a close alliance with Ladislaus and consequent

* Memorie della Città di Firenze, dal 1410 al 1460, Da Boninsegni, Lib. i°, p. 4.

† Muratori, Anno 1409.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 136.

hostility to Florence and the Duke of Anjou, nor did peace with the first reëstablish tranquillity: much Florentine merchandise had been captured; the Genoese were jealous of the incipient maritime power of Florence; Porto Venere, Lerici, Porto Fino, and Sarezzanello had either revolted or been purchased and in 1411 placed themselves under Florentine protection; so that constant but petty warfare continued until April 1413, when by the pope's mediation tranquillity was restored *. While these disputes were warm from commercial jealousy the unfortunate nation whose spoils had occasioned them was fast melting away; Pisa was already so depopulated that in the beginning of 1413 an act appeared for encouraging strangers to settle there by several exemptions and privileges, and other encouragements of a similar nature were offered to attract agricultural labourers back to the Florentine territory which still writhed under the effects of war †. A.D. 1413.

Urged both by Anjou and the Romans, Pope John XXIII. and that prince repaired unwillingly to Rome in March 1411. Louis had assembled a strong army of ill-paid and therefore discontented veterans, but able for any enterprise; and no time was lost in leading them against Ladislaus whom he attacked and defeated with great slaughter at Ponte Corvo. Had this blow been ably followed up both king and kingdom would have fallen; but the interest of Italian condottieri was not peace, and if at any time they haply found themselves surprised into a victory it was seldom made more use of than to ransom prisoners or let them go without, according to former intimacy or rivalry; for to-day they might be fighting side by side, to-morrow in adverse ranks, and again be friends and comrades without any consequent dishonour; as they engaged for short periods and had no party. Delays and excuses were now made

* D. Boninsegni, Mem. della Città di Firenze, Lib. i°, p. [illegible].

† S. Ammirato, Stor., Lib. xviii., p. 965.—Mecatti, vol. i., p. 356.

by Anjou's captains until Ladislaus having ransomed most of his troops appeared again in arms and saved his kingdom. "The first day," said he, "both life and kingdom were in "jeopardy; the second, only my kingdom, and the third "neither." Anjou thus baffled retired in disgust to Rome whence in August 1411 he proceeded to Pisa and thence to France, where he died in 1417 without again seeing Italy. Meanwhile Bologna took advantage of the pope's absence to recover its liberty, which by the mediation of Florence, without entirely renouncing every allegiance to the church it for a while preserved *.

Difficulties now accumulated on the pontiff, who found himself alone with a fierce enemy in front, rebellion in his rear, and all the apprehensions of a general council, which was a condition of his election, hanging over his head. Thus circumstanted and eager for revenge on Paulo Orsini whom he considered as the real cause of his ill success against Ladislaus, he bought a peace and the expulsion of Pope Gregory with the adhesion of the Neapolitan clergy for 100,000 florins, and dismissing Orsini to his estates in La Marca secretly gave notice to Ladislaus that this man's removal would not be displeasing. The treaty was signed in June 1412, but did not last; for Ladislaus fearing the pope's intrigues to bring the emperor to Rome for the purpose of crushing him, lost no time in sending Sforza against Orsini, while he prepared to follow with an army apparently to support the former, but turning suddenly on Rome while his flotilla occupied the Tiber invested that city in May 1413. After a feeble resistance the town surrendered and Pope Giovanni retired in alarm towards Florence †.

* S. Ammirato, Stor., Lib. xviii., p. 962.—Giannone, Lib. xxiv., cap. vii. —Sismondi, cap. lxi., vol. vi., p. 132. —Salviati, p. 357.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 963.

† Giannone (Lib. xxiv., cap. viii.) says that the pope left Rome before the attack of Ladislaus but I have followed all the other authors cotemporary and subsequent. Amongst them Buon. Pitti, Cronaca, p. 96.—Muratori, Anno 1412.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 136.—Poggio, Lib. iv., p. 129.—S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xviii., p. 967.

Ladislaus had made peace but not friends with the Florentines; his object was to frighten them into a league with him, wherefore one of his first acts was to seize all Florentine property in Rome and promise the future plunder of their city itself to his soldiers. The Seignory on hearing this immediately formed a new war council of Ten in which we see the names of Giovanni de' Medici and Nicolò d'Uzzàno, and reëngaged Malatesta of Pesaro, who had already proved himself so able a captain, for their general. Many feudal barons alarmed at the progress of Ladislaus claimed protection from Florence which though prepared for war endeavoured by a special embassy, by refusing the pope an asylum within her walls, and in every other manner to prevent it: the pontiff was lodged in one of the episcopal villas, did not even enter the city for several months, and departed in November for Bologna which another revolution had again brought under his jurisdiction in September 1412*.

While these negotiations were in progress Ladislaus mastered all the ecclesiastical cities and stretched his conquests along the confines of Florence and Siena without however violating their territory; he nearly succeeded in securing the services of Nicolas d'Este and made him his gonfalonier beyond the Apennines but was baffled by Florence and the Emperor Sigismond, whose joint remonstrance induced Nicolas to return the royal gonfalon and join the church. Early in 1414 Ladislaus assembled a large army by every sort of injustice and persecution; by sales of titles, offices, confiscation, and all the various expedients of oppressive governments, and then marched with a threatening countenance towards Florence. The Seignory nevertheless persisted in their negotiations and finally succeeded in concluding a peace at his camp near Assisi on the twenty-second of June 1414, much to the popular discontent, for suspicion and fear had full possession of the

A.D. 1414.

* S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xviii., p. 968.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 138.—Muratori, Anno 1412 and 1413.—B. Pitti, Cronaca, p. 97.

public mind and although Ladislaus was not without his friends the pope had a strong and influential party in the commonwealth. An earthquake of some strength about this period shook the city and with it the superstitious minds of the people, who were foreboding nothing but misfortunes when intelligence arrived that Ladislaus had been taken ill at Perugia and was carried back to Rome; thence he proceeded by sea to Naples and died in great agony on the sixth of August 1414*.

Giannone gives a different account of this transaction and asserts that Ladislaus being determined on the subjugation of Florence pretended, in order to deceive that people, to turn his arms in other directions and remained himself at Perugia to conceal his intentions for a while and thus terrify the Tuscan, Romagnian, and Lombard towns so thoroughly as to levy contributions from all. Ambassadors soon arrived from Florence, Siena, Bologna, and other places, and all were received graciously, but the King's speech was ambiguous and a design of passing into Lombardy was occasionally manifested. From the other cities he finally accepted presents but continued treating with Florence, and so impressed her ambassadors with the notion of his hostile determination that it was said they bribed a Perugian physician whose daughter was his mistress to poison him through her means. The girl herself was deceived by the supposition that she was communicating a philter that would retain the King's affections and soon expired of the same poison that destroyed her lover †. The atrocity of a father in thus sacrificing his own daughter makes us dismiss this story in disgust, but whether the Florentines secretly caused Ladislaus to be poisoned remains in the same state of uncertainty as their other alleged crimes of a similar nature against the emperor Henry VII. and Gian-Galeazzo

* Muratore, Anno 1414.—Poggio, Lib. iv., p. 130.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 971.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 139.

† Giannone, Stor. Civile di Napoli, Lib. xxiv., cap. viii.—Angelo di Costanzo, Istoria di Napoli, vol. ii., Lib. xii., p. 221.

Visconte. We know that men even in the present day will agree to perpetrate crimes in a body and at a distance, for public purposes, that none of them would individually commit, and how much more likely then when the commonwealth's existence was at stake and assassination or the poisoned chalice not in the worst repute. Be this as it may, these murders have never been proved and the fears of Florence were now ended; but thus, says Macchiavelli, and the remark is curious, was death ever more favourable to her than any other of her friends, and more powerfully conducive to her safety than any virtue of her own *.

During this unhappy period Lombardy was a prey to every species of villany and Germany rivalled even Italy in troubles: Winceslaus driven from the imperial throne still reigned in Bohemia: Robert his successor tried hard to reconcile contending factions and almost fell a victim to the turbulence of his vassal princes. Death relieved him from further vexation in 1409, and his successor Sigismund warred against Venice on account of Zara which that republic had bought from Ladislaus; but after vainly attempting to force a passage into Italy made peace in April 1413. He then passed quietly into Lombardy during that time full of every horror; the condottieri unsatiated with their numerous and bloody usurpations contended in arms against each other for the scraps and crumbs that were still left to the Milanese princes; town after town was given up to plunder and suffered the most horrible torments from a savage and rapacious soldiery; history, says Sismondi, presents no period more calamitous than that which followed the death of Gian-Galeazzo: all that has been told of the most barbarous nations is entirely surpassed in cruelty by the soldiers of this period: not a spark of enthusiasm, not a generous sentiment ever found access to their mind: they felt no warlike passion but the desire of wealth and the licence

* Macchiavelli, Stor. Fiorentine, Lib. iii.

of blood. No patriotism, no party spirit, no religious zeal had put arms in their hands, and no respect divine or human could ever make them lay their weapons down: the people exposed to their rapacity suffered so much the more because they were more civilised; strangers to danger, to privation, and to suffering, people who lived in ease and tranquillity, who were acquainted with the arts and the charms of social life, passed in a moment without provocation, without motive, from opulence to the deepest poverty, from a life of luxury to a prison or the headsman's axe.

Gian-Maria Visconte Duke of Milan cared only for that power that indulged his taste for blood: full of the most infernal propensities he became himself the public executioner and in fiendish revelry hunted with hounds and tore to pieces the criminals within his reach. His huntsman and chief favourite "*Squarcia Giramo*" by name, trained the dogs and fed them on human flesh expressly for this purpose, and when convicts became scarce the Duke to supply more game declared that he would revenge his mother's death to which he himself had most contributed; and exposed many suspected nobles to the fangs of his blood-hounds. Amongst these victims was Giovanni di Posterla whose son a boy of only twelve years old threw himself on his knees in agony, imploring mercy of this human monster; even the very dogs themselves were sensible to pity and after first smelling at him could not be brought to harm the innocent child: not so their masters: Squarcia by the Duke's order cut his throat and exposed his entrails, but these generous animals even then would neither lap his blood nor devour his reeking flesh! Such are lordly reason and brutish instinct! The names of these two noble creatures, the fiercest of the pack, were "*Il Guerzo*" and "*La Sibillina;*" and why should they not be recorded? It is not the first moral lesson that man has received from dogs!*

* D. Boninsegni, Memorie della Citta di Firenze, Lib. i°, p. 6.—Bernardino Corio, Historie Milanese, Parte iv°, p. 303.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 146, &c.

Facino Cani of Alexandria after seizing on the dominions of Filippo Maria Visconte forced himself with mailed hand into the Duke's councils and usurped the sovereignty, reducing both brothers to such poverty as even to be distressed for food and clothing. He was struck by a mortal sickness in 1412, and the Milanese dreading a renewal of Visconte's tyranny murdered the latter a few hours before Facino died. Filippo showed unexpected energy, and although only twenty years of age secured the mercenaries by taking them into his pay and marrying their general's widow a woman of forty; he then revenged his brother's death and firmly seated himself on the throne of Milan. Sigismund meanwhile took up his residence at Lodi, where he was entirely occupied in settling ecclesiastical affairs, and in concert with Pope John's ambassadors, though against the pontiff's wish, convoked a general council to meet at Constance on the first of November 1414. It was opened on the fifth of that month by Giovanni XXIII. in person.

Cotemporary Monarchs.—England: Henry IV. to 1413; Henry V. to 1422.—Scotland: Robert III. to 1405; James I. 1406, (prisoner in England.)—France: Charles VI. (the maniac and the beloved.)—Spain, Castile and Leon: Henry III. to 1406; John II.—Aragon: Martin V. to 1410; then Ferdinand of Castile (*elected* 1412 by nine arbitrators.)—Portugal: John I.—German Emperors: Robert (Count Palatine) to 1410; then Sigismund of Luxemburg.—Naples: Ladislaus to 1414; then Joanna II. (his sister.)—Sicily: Martin of Aragon, husband of Maria, to 1409; when Sicily becomes a province of Aragon.—Greek Emperors: Manuel II.—Turkish Empire: Bajazet (Ilderim) to 1403; then made prisoner by Timur; ten years' anarchy; then Mohammed I. 1413.—Popes: Boniface IX. to 1404; Innocent VII. to 1406; Gregory XII. to 1409; Alexander V. to 1410; John XXIII. to 1415; deposed by the Council of Constance. The Council of Constance, the second for Church Reformation lasted from 1414 to 1418, and passed its famous decree which declared the superiority of councils over the papal chair.

CHAPTER XXX.

FROM A.D. 1415 TO A.D. 1428.

ABOUT the time that Ladislaus expired Florence was shaken by an earthquake that in addition to its natural terrors filled the community with dread as the supposed forerunner of greater calamities: certain intelligence of the former event soon calmed their inquietude and unexpectedly relieved them from anxiety and danger, for his enmity had once threatened their very existence, and their resources were singly inadequate to maintain a long struggle against the power of any absolute monarchy when wielded by an able and unsparing hand. By this event their incipient tranquillity was confirmed and lasted until the year 1423, when a new war with Milan brought fresh troubles and heavier burdens on the people*. The dominion of Florence now embraced half Tuscany and part of Romagna, and her influence spread over a considerable portion of Italy, an influence more of necessity than good-will, for in proportion as her powers unfolded so did jealousy augment, and what her energy acquired awakened only envy in her less enterprising neighbours. During this quiet interval she applied herself to the revision of internal regulations: a board called the "*Ten of Peace*" with opposite functions to the "*Ten of War*" was again voted as a sort of counterpoise to the latter whenever a necessity occurred for

A.D. 1415.

* Poggio, Storia, Lib. v., p. 132.—Boninsegni, Memorie, Lib. i., p. 7.

their reappointment; but we hear nothing afterwards of its operations or the precise nature of its duties. Additional reverence was paid to religious houses by an exemption from military billets and the prohibition of music, singing and gaming, in their vicinity; but during the vacancy occasioned by Pope John's deposition at Constance in 1415 the administration of unoccupied benefices was intrusted entirely to secular hands and the superintending officers of finance after supplying all spiritual wants were ordered to invest any surplus ecclesiastical revenue in public securities. To the Executor of the Ordinances of Justice was consigned, along with the title of "*Conservator of the Statutes and public Decency*," the superintendence of public morals which had previously belonged to a special magistracy, and a curious half-reasoning law was about the same time promulgated for better supplying the Florentine fish market. By this regulation vendors were allowed to put any price they pleased upon that commodity but without the power of subsequent alteration either way, however scarce or plentiful the fish might be: we are not informed about the periodical alteration of this assize but the law continued in force, though not unblamed, during the Medician dynasty*.

From 1413, a commission of five citizens along with *Volpi da Soncino* and *Paulo di Castro* two eminent jurisconsults, had been occupied in forming a new code of law which was now completed and published under the title of the "*Florentine Statute*." It was first brought into activity about this period but though very minute and interesting like other codes that exclude the principle of arbitration, soon became inapplicable to all the variety of human transactions. To remedy this the custom of granting to each new magistracy a peculiar statute adapted to the special nature of its functions was afterwards resorted to, or perhaps continued, and thus filled the commonwealth with that vast entanglement of judicial opera- A.D. 1416.

* Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 974.

tions which cost Peter Leopold of Austria so much time and labour to remove *.

A plague which lasted eight months, and increasing with the summer heats carried off sixteen thousand souls and caused accumulated misery amongst the poor; for on these all public burdens and calamities ultimately fall, and with accelerated force like heavy bodies to the centre of gravity. To mitigate this the Seignory besides liberal grants of money food and medicine, suspended all taxation for two years in the rural districts, and it was during this mortality that, either by pestilence or nature Maso degli Albizzi a man of great intellect and vast influence over the destinies of his country, was relieved from the pains of life. He had lived and laboured through a stormy day; had seen his race in high consideration; rich, fortunate, and powerful: he next beheld their dwellings burned, their fortunes ruined, their chief beheaded, himself banished, and his family divided even to the assumption of other arms and surname. Times again changed; the Ciompi and all their leaders fell; Maso was recalled; he entered with more vigour than justice, but according to the spirit of the age, into party politics; and fiercely led a fiercer faction: revenging himself on the once towering Alberti and all other foes he absorbed the supreme power and after a long reign died in peace opulence and public reputation. Maso left children, and his son Rinaldo endeavoured to replace him, but though an eloquent and able man he was not equal to the task, perhaps was not so honest as his father and finally sunk before the ascending star of Cosimo de' Medici.

A.D. 1417.

Niccolo d' Uzzàno, Bartolommeo Valori, Nerone Dietisalvi, Neri and Gino Capponi and Lapo Niccolini still secretly governed the state; not that they enjoyed any of the regular

* Foro Fiorentino, da Tommaso Forti, MS., Magliabechiano, Library.—Pompeo Neri, Relazion delle Magistrature Fiorentine, MS. in author's possession, p. 54.

official dignities out of their turn, but they influenced all that were chosen and initiated every public measure in their private chambers; on their speeches was formed the character of the debate, and scarcely a Balià, or a Decemvirate of war, or any extraordinary council or important embassy, or superintendent commissaries of the republican armies, or any public office of high authority, was ever appointed without one or more of their names being included. Nevertheless they had a powerful though calm and gentle opponent in Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, a man of great influence and honesty who now began to take a more active part in public affairs; and a far more bitter morsel in his son the celebrated Cosimo now also beginning to show himself in the higher circles of politics *. But as the civil domestic transactions will be explained in a separate chapter we will now resume the narrative of A.D. 1418. foreign affairs until permanent peace was restored by the treaty of Ferrara in 1428. Leaving Braccio de' Fortebracci da Montone to guard Romagna and Antonio bishop of Siena as legate of Bologna, Pope John XXIII. proceeded to Constance in 1414, and was there received by the emperor Sigismond, his attendant princes prelates and other followers, to the number of thirty thousand people on horseback. This council commenced in peace, yet was soon troubled by dissensions between the spiritual and temporal monarchs, so that after four months' disputation Pope John by the duke of Austria's advice secretly withdrew from it but was afterwards arrested by that treacherous potentate and brought back to Constance in 1415. The pontiff's absence and misfortunes encouraged Bologna to revolt and under the auspices of Battista da Cannelotti declare her independence. On this Braccio da Montone was summoned to the rescue; he soon answered the call, but made terms with the citizens and at once sacrificed legate, church, and pope for 100,000 florins which he received as the price of

* Gio. Cavalcanti, Istorie Fiorentine, Lib. ii°, cap. i°, MS. also Ed. Firenze, 1839.

Bolognese liberty. He then departed to conquer that of Perugia for himself an enterprise long meditated and accomplished in July 1416, but after a sanguinary contest of six hours with Carlo Malatesta on the banks of the Tiber. Braccio extended his conquests even to Rome itself and became while he lived and under Florentine protection, a most powerful tyrant; for these republicans were not always shocked at the subjection of an independent neighbour, nor with all their reverence for the church, were they displeased to see Perugia and Bologna completely beyond its control*. Pope John XXIII. was deposed in 1415. Gregory XII. resigned the following year, but Benedict XIII. would never relinquish his hold of the diadem. In 1417, Oddo Colonna was raised to the Popedom under the name of Martin V. and early in 1418 a Florentine embassy was sent to offer any part of their dominions as a residence but recommending the deposed pontiff and their own favourite Braccio da Montone to his protection. These were bold requests because a deposed pope who had not acknowledged his successor was an object of extreme jealousy, and Braccio had not only been false to the church in the affair of Bologna but had actually usurped one of its most important and undisputed fiefs, besides many other ecclesiastical possessions. Nevertheless, shut out from Rome, which had been recovered by the Neapolitan army; excluded from Bologna; which though nominally free was ruled by Antonio Bentivoglio; debarred from Perugia and other ecclesiastical cities by Braccio da Montone, and almost every other place in confusion; Martin gladly accepted this offer and entered Florence on the fifteenth of March 1519†.

* Dom. Boninsegni, Lib. i., p. 11, Mem. —S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 976.— Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 179.

† Gio. Morelli says on 26 February (" Ricordi," p. 43.) — Cambi, ditto, p. 141, in whose history, vol. xx., Del. Er. Tos., at p. 147 may be seen an account of Pope John's death and the disposal of his fortune. So far from the Medici deriving any money from this pontiff as they are accused of, there is still extant a confession of his debt

This was a crowning triumph to all her late success: after withstanding the formidable Ladislaus, materially promoting the assembly of both councils, renouncing Pope Gregory XII. and making so long and strenuous exertions to heal the schism; now to find herself chosen as the first dwelling-place and asylum of a legitimate pope after so many years of discord, was an honour duly appreciated by this devout and zealous community *. A.D. 1419.

Extraordinary preparations were made for Martin's reception and he to reward this devotion elevated the see of Florence to an archbishopric that it might at least equal that of the conquered Pisa. The deposed pontiff after escaping from a German prison determined to avoid further persecution by doing reverence to Martin at Florence and trusting entirely to his magnanimity. He was not disappointed: an honourable reception, a restoration to the cardinalate with preëminence over all the sacred college, together with the sympathy of Florence soothed the remaining days of his existence for he died in a few months after, leaving but little of worldly goods, and appointing three Florentine citizens as his executors. The names of Niccolò d' Uzzàno, Valori, Guadagni, and Giovanni de' Medici, at once repel the scandal of Cosimo de' Medici's having secretly, and as Filelfo says infamously, derived the great bulk of his riches from this unfortunate pontiff †.

The influence of Florence had not yet succeeded in favour of Braccio who had been already anathematised, but with so little

to Giovanni de' Medici (6 December, 1418,) of 38,500 florins paid to Duke Lodovick of Austria for his liberation, and other things connected with his ransom. Also the order for payment by the house of Giov. de' Medici at Venice to that of Romel and Co. of Noremberg, and an autograph letter from the deposed pope to Giov. de' Medici, (June 5th 1419,) all preserved in the Medicean Archives, and published for the first time in Archivio Storico Italiano (vol. iv., page 433, Documenti, i., ii., and iii.,) in 1843.

* S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 951.

† Tenhoven, Memoire Généalogique de la Maison de' Medici, Lib. iv., p. 30.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 985. —Muratori Annali, An. 1419.—Gio. Cambi, pp. 146, 147.

effect that he excommunicated the pope in return and retained his cities; peace was however ultimately established, and Braccio invited to reverence Martin at Florence where he was enthu-
A.D. 1420. siastically received by every class of the community. Public spectacles and entertainments were given in his honour, poets chanted his praise, and nothing short of a Roman triumph could have exceeded the magnificence of his reception.

This was sufficiently grating to a pontiff whose estates he held and whose authority he had derided; but when the praises of Braccio were mingled with jests and sarcasms on himself; when the children in the streets were encouraged to echo under his windows the doggerels* that those of higher station had made on him; and when he saw these insults unnoticed by the public authorities on pretence of their being mere childish wantonness, Martin felt his dignity contemned as a man, a prince, and a pontiff; and resented it accordingly. "*Dunque*," he was frequently overheard repeating to himself, "*Dunque*," "*Papa Martino non vale un lupino*," and from that moment he determined to abandon Florence and the Florentines. The original cause of this unpopularity does not appear, but so great was his mortification that from the ninth to the fifteenth of April 1420 the city was laid under an interdict and he quitted it in the following September †.

The first war with Pisa began by a trifling quarrel about a lap-dog, and a silly rhyme now threw Pope Martin into the arms of the Ghibelines and brought lasting misfortunes on Florence. Braccio nevertheless managed to make his peace, was appointed ecclesiastical vicar in several towns which he already possessed, surrendered others of minor importance,

* "Papa Martino, non vale un quattrino," or "un lupino"—Pope Martin is not worth a farthing—was the most offensive couplet.

† Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 987, says *one day:* but the above is on the authority of Fabroni who in his notes to the Life of Cosimo cites the Diary of Ceretani in the Riccardiana Library. —Fabroni, Vita Mag. Cos. Med., vol. ii°, p. 16.

undertook to reduce Bologna to obedience, and accomplished all in a brief space as the declared champion of the church*.

During some negotiations with Genoa about the piratical conduct of Giovanni Grimaldi Lord of Monaco, the cession of Leghorn to Florence as a parcel of the Pisan territory was concluded and thus a nest of pirates always dangerous to Florentine commerce in its departure from the port of Pisa, became on the contrary a secure harbour at the price of 100,000 florins and drew more attention to naval affairs. A board called "*The Six Consuls of the Sea*" was accordingly created, who residing at Pisa immediately opened a direct trade with Alexandria and constructed two large merchant and six war galleys for that purpose; but the Florentine genius although commercial was not maritime; and their navy, with all the physical means and more than the power of Pisa, never rose to much importance even under the care of the Medicean princes and knights of San Stefano; for in this art as in many of their virtues, the Florentines were rather speculative than practical †. With the theory of virtue especially, they seem to have been more familiar than with its habits if we may judge of the subsoil by what is turned up on the surface of history: there as elsewhere both good and evil deeds were often agreed to in public assemblies which by the individuals that composed them would in private life have been either loathed or neglected: in public assemblies each member bears only a fraction of the crime on his own shoulders and is rarely its immediate executor; hence that public odium which accumulates on the single head of the despot is, in popular states, sprinkled over a thousand that scarcely feel or know, and never acknowledge their iniquity. A.D. 1421.

About this period several wholesome laws were promulgated

* Giov. Morelli, Ricor., p. 51.—Gio. Cambi, Stor., p. 151.—Dom. Boninsegni, Mem. di Firenze, Lib. i., p. 14.—Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 987.—Muratori, Anno 1420.

† Dom. Boninsegni, Lib. i., p. 17.—Giov. Cambi, Stor., p. 155.

which show a stricter attention to private morality, population, and public decency than became apparent in their effects; and yet they probably sprang from the quiet underworking of a mass of latent moral feeling and principle that held society together more firmly than the writings of cotemporary authors would lead us to suppose; the sentiments of these writers are generally wise gentle and humane; occasionally bitter, but often imbued with more of modern principle than ancient barbarity; the universal approval of the law of retaliation, however cruelly executed, being perhaps one of their greatest faults. For instance Cavalcanti, a man apparently of honour and feeling, tells us without any marks of disapprobation that Count Carmagnola ordered a farrier of his army to be shoed like a horse, only because he had raised the price of iron so much as to prevent one of the troop-horses from being shod in time, by which the services of a man-at-arms were lost for the day! The farrier of course died not long after of this cruel operation *.

One of those measures above alluded to, arising from relaxation of conventual discipline, was the creation of a board of nine married citizens not under fifty years of age to superintend the female convents of Florence and the neighbourhood, and about the same time a decree passed the councils which rendered all those citizens ineligible to public office who had not paid up their portion of the taxes or loans for thirty years: this shaft was probably directed against the artisans, who under the favour of Giovanni de' Medici were resuming strength in the councils, and was aimed by the *Popolani Grassi* a powerful class almost exempt from taxation, as we shall hereafter see. But another and more curious bill was introduced and only rejected in its last stage, which excluded every man between thirty and fifty years of age from public office who was not or had not been married. As this embraced a great mass of eligible citizens considerable agitation arose during its dis-

* Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorent., Lib. iv., cap. x.

cussion; yet it nearly succeeded, and although ultimately lost, is mentioned to show what earnest attention was paid to population and morals for no doubt both were here contemplated; and moreover there is reason to suspect that the latter had suffered in consequence of large marriage-portions a heavy tax and doubtful gain in consequence of the necessity of repayment under certain conditions: these, added to severe and unequal taxation together with the subdivision of inheritances, had reduced many families to extreme poverty and therefore checked marriages *.

About this period also and for the first time, a regular official salary was given to the priors and their notary: hitherto these situations had been filled without pay; a custom more honourable in appearance than practically beneficial, for there were but few Florentines who devoted themselves like Gino Capponi to their country: abandoning not only every private worldly benefit but even higher aspirations he left as a maxim to his son Neri, that even his own soul should be sacrificed to the good of Florence †.

Gino died on the nineteenth of May 1421 and was honoured with a public funeral. Bold, able, and determined; not lettered, but sagacious in government and well acquainted with the world, Gino lived for his country and died without riches at a time when peculation was the handmaiden of war and high official dignity. Neri succeeded to the ability and virtues of his father and soon became a conspicuous actor in the political drama of Florence, and Gino's management of the Pisan war renders his name memorable in Florentine history as the conqueror of a powerful state whose fall first opened the direct sea-trade of the Levant to native enterprise, for which the first galley was about this time built and launched ‡. Trifling as this circumstance now appears it was A.D. 1422.

* Cavalcanti, Stor. Fior., Lib. iº, cap. xi.,
† S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 994.—Gio. Cambi, pp. 156, 157, &cª.
‡ Gio. Cambi, p. 153.—Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 991.—Cavalcanti, Lib. i., cap. x.

then hailed as a great event in Florence, and public rejoicings and solemn religious processions ushered in the day; a new outlet for commercial industry was opened, a new naval power had commenced, and the republican flag was thereafter to be its own protector on the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

This Florentine Argo was manned with a crew of two hundred and fifty souls including twelve young men of the highest families, now sent to receive their first lesson in maritime affairs. Moreover, to facilitate trade, and knowing how difficult it was to reconcile people with a strange coinage and reckoning, more especially foreigners who had been used for ages to the Venetian currency; that species of florin called on this occasion the "*Fiorino largo di Galea*" or *Broad Galley piece* was struck to the exact size and weight of the Venetian ducat. Ambassadors were at the same time despatched to the Soldan of Egypt; or Babylonia as he was then denominated; with full powers to treat on commercial affairs, while another embassy opened the portals of trade in the Morea at the courts of Antonio Acciaiuoli lord of Corinth, and the Duke of Cephalonia: a third mission proceeded to Majorca in order to render the Florentine flag respected in that quarter, and thus was fairly commenced the naval power of republican Florence.

Her position in Italy now stood high, her dominions were wide, her friends and subjects numerous, and both Poggio and Ammirato assure us; the latter more from the authority of private records than public archives; that she never was in so flourishing a condition or so full of wealth as during the interval between the death of Ladislaus and the Milanese war in 1423. In those streets alone which surround the Mercato Nuovo there were no less than seventy-two "*Banchi di Tavolello e Tappeto*" or regular banking establishments; and the gold currency alone, as it would appear; but certainly the metallic currency was estimated at 2,000,000 florins, which at the lowest computation would now equal more than that number

of pounds sterling *. The value of merchandise, of real and moveable property and public stock is described as enormous, but the necessity for so vast an amount of metallic currency alone indicates the rapid exchange of commodities and consequent prosperity; yet we shall soon see how all this was dissipated by war.

Meanwhile arts and sciences partook of the general vitality: new manufactures, and amongst them that of golden thread, were introduced or invented; the cloth of gold and silk trades received a fresh impulse, the powers of architectural genius were carried to an extraordinary height in the majestic cupola of the Duomo which Brunellesco raised without a centering in the face of all the baffled architects of Europe: the arts of sculpture and metal-casting then astonished the world in the hands of Ghiberti, and still fascinate all those who now gaze on the beauty of his brazen portals. Neither did painting tarry; for under the fostering hand of Massolino, Massaccio's bolder genius was fast approaching the higher regions of art. Leonardo Bruni of Arezzo, better known as Leonardo Aretino the historian, had revived eloquence and promoted the study of Greek and Latin literature, and Florence was altogether full of sagacious citizens: many of the ancient nobility had gradually become incorporated with the people and the whole community enjoyed an unusual period of comfort and repose †.

Such were the fruits of peace and such the state of Florence when the distant sounds of war again rolled amongst the Apennines, and the Lombard plains scarce dry from native slaughter prepared once more for foreign hostilities.

This new breach with Milan seems to have originated in the ambition of Philip Visconte supported and encouraged by Pope

* Grain for grain it would equal 1,200,000 sovereigns taking each of them roughly at 120 grains of gold of 24 carats, and the florin at 72 of the same fineness; but the sovereign is only 22 carats.

† Boninsegni, Memorie, Lib. i., pp. 16, 17.—Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 997.—Poggio, Lib. v., p. 135.—Gio. Cambi, p. 150.

Martin's intense animosity against Florence which spurred him on to exalt the Ghibeline and humble the Guelphic faction in Italy; but more especially was he bent on chastising the Florentines for those indignities which they had encouraged or at least permitted to be practised against him *. As this war was a powerful effort of the republic under discouraging circumstances, and comprised both naval and military operations to as great an extent, if not greater than in any former quarrel, some introductory notice becomes necessary.

A.D. 1423.

Philip Maria Visconte was a faint reflection of his father Gian-Galeazzo in everything except cruelty, but still more wayward and unsettled in his designs †. One of his first acts of domestic tyranny was to sacrifice his wife Beatrice, the first author of his greatness, whose only fault seems to have been that of giving her hand to so unworthy a man: Beatrice Tenda the widow of Facino Cane had brought him a dower consisting of Tortona, Novare, Alexandria, Vercelli, Como, and several other places, together with 100,000 florins and a fine army of veterans, and is described as a noble-minded, gentle, patient, and generous woman; but all this was lost upon a man of opposite character and twenty years younger than herself ‡. When firmly seated therefore and independent of her aid, as most of his father's dominions were recovered, Beatrice who probably never was an object of affection ceased to be one of policy: she became an obstacle that required displacement and was accused of infidelity: her supposed admirer, tortured into the admission of a crime as false as the charge, gave colour to this accusation: she also was tormented, but in vain; she acknowledged no guilt: both were condemned to the block, where some lingering hope of ultimate pardon induced the feeble-minded Orombelli to repeat his former avowal. He was rebuked by the noble

* Poggio, Lib. v., p. 141.—Gio. Morelli, Ricord., p. 51.

† Poggio, Lib. v., p. 141.

‡ Corio, Parte iv°, p. 306.

Beatrice. "Are we then," exclaimed she disdainfully, "Are "we then in a place where human fear is to overcome that of "the living God? I also have suffered as you have, Michele "Orombelli; I have undergone the same torments that have "torn this shameful confession from *your* lips; but all this "cruelty has not succeeded in making me calumniate myself! "An honourable pride would ever have preserved me chaste "even had my own virtue not been sufficient to do so: nover- "theless whatever distance there is between us I do not yet "believe that you will be so base as to dishonour yourself at "the only moment offered you wherein to acquire some glory. "The world abandons me; the sole witness of my innocence "gives his testimony against me; it is thee O my God in whom "I will put my trust! Thou seest that I am without stain, "and to thy grace I am indebted for having always been so: "thou hast preserved my thoughts as thou hast my conduct "from all impurity, but perhaps thou dost now punish me for "violating by a second marriage the respect that was due to "the ashes of my former husband, and I receive with submis- "sion the reproof at thy hand! I recommend to thy mercy "him who owes his greatness to me; and I expect from thy "goodness; as thou hast preserved my life innocent; that "thou wilt also preserve my memory unsullied in the eyes of "men." So saying she laid her neck meekly on the block and with two of her female attendants and Orombelli was immediately executed *.

By the great military talents of his General Francis Bussone, surnamed Carmagnola from the place of his nativity, whose early merits, although only a swine-herd's son, Philip had the discernment to appreciate; he had recovered most of the Milanese dominions and amongst them the walls and houses of Placentia: the city had remained desolate a whole year; three inhabitants alone were found in three different quarters

* Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 206.—Corio, Parte iv^a, p. 315.

of the town; grass waved knee-deep in the streets, and tall plants of hemlock grew rankly in the doorways. Such peace as this having been restored to Lombardy Philip's arms were in 1418 turned on Genoa, then as ever distracted by the clash of opposing factions *. She had driven forth the French in 1411 and the Marquis of Monferrato in 1413 and was at this time governed by the new Doge Tommaso Campo Fregoso a man of considerable talent but unable to restrain the wild and stormy elements of a Genoese aristocracy. Apprehensive of Florentine opposition Philip despatched ambassadors to secure neutrality by the formal ratification of a peace that had been tacitly maintained almost ever since his father's death and the consequent distraction of Lombardy. Much specious reasoning and peaceful language were used by both sides, and long discussions ensued in the Florentine councils. Nicholas d'Uzzàno, Gino Capponi, with other leading citizens were opposed to a formal treaty which by binding them would leave him free to give full scope to his ambition and which they firmly believed he only sought for that purpose. Florence being once lulled, so great was his perfidy, an invasion of Tuscany might be expected on the first favourable occasion and it was therefore proposed either to dismiss the embassy with an equivocal answer or openly assist Genoa, but not abandon her for a hollow and deceitful peace: better they said to do what was really useful and safe even at the expense of existing comforts than trust to doubt suspicion and uncertainty. The opposition, in which was the great mass of the poorer citizens, declared that existing quiet was not to be lightly sacrificed; that Genoa would not be easily taken, and even were she to fall Lombardy itself was in no condition to undertake a new war against those who had withstood the more able and powerful Gian-Galeazzo when, besides his transapennine states, he possessed half Tuscany. This opinion prevailed and a treaty of

* Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 208.

peace was signed in January 1420, by which Philip engaged not to send a soldier beyond the Magra towards Tuscany, or across the Panaro towards Bologna; nor pass the Modenese frontier, nor hold any possessions nor assist any state beyond those limits; the Bolognese, the Lord of Forlì, and the Malespini of Lunigiana being included as allies of Florence in this treaty. Leghorn as we have seen was purchased by the latter in 1421, and Genoa pressed by the united forces of Visconte and Alfonso of Aragon soon after capitulated and became a province of Milan. The Doge was deposed and received Sarzana from Philip as a compensation, but as this town was on the Tuscan side of the Magra he was charged with a violation of the treaty. Martin's enmity was kept warm not only by the Florentines' continued support of Braccio, who was again his enemy and asserted that before he finished the pope should say a hundred masses for a penny; but because they had repeatedly refused to join with him for his own political purposes *. This feeling was still more embittered by a recent refusal to unite with Alphonso legate of Bologna against the intrigues of Antonio Bentivoglio who was in the neighbourhood, and which threw Alphonso into the arms of Visconte: the latter immediately signed a treaty of alliance with Martin although Florence partly through fear of offending him and partly through fidelity to Braccio, who must have been abandoned, had refused. Visconte's conduct was deemed a second and graver breach of the peace, and occasioned strong remonstrances and long discussions, until the death of Giorgio degli Ordilaffi Lord of Forlì brought the matter to a crisis. He left his widow Lucrezia degli Alidosi of Imola and an infant son Tedaldo under the guardianship of Visconte; but she fearing her husband's sister Caterina and the people, who were all Ghibelines, renewed the Florentine alliance while Caterina's husband Bartolommeo da Campo Fregoso aspiring to the lord-

* Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 986.—Poggio, Lib. v., p. 135.

ship of Forlì embraced the Milanese party. Philip who was the lawful guardian and wanted possession of both the young child and its inheritance, dexterously played one sister against the other by secret negotiations with each, and putting doubt and dissension between them; while he, in consequence of his Bolognese alliance, was enabled to throw several bodies of horse into that territory but ready for action elsewhere.

These transactions, the most flagrant breach of the Florentine treaty, ended in the exile of Lucrezia, and Caterina's occupation of Forlì with the aid of Milanese troops. All Florence was now in commotion, a detachment of soldiers was sent to protect Lucrezia in Forlimpopoli; letters and envoys were despatched to Visconte and Martin, with no other result than the removal of Alphonso from Bologna and plausible words from both *. Milanese ambassadors arrived at Florence to justify their master who appealed to the Roman law, which even by the Florentine doctors was secretly owned to be in his favour; but the Seignory laughed at law in opposition to treaties, describing it as soft leather capable of being stretched into any form at the holder's will. A proposition in the councils suggested the reference of this question to a select committee when Rinaldo Albizzi rose and loudly asserted that it was the business of the many, not the few, and therefore needed the counsel of many; adding, "Let the case be determined by law "and if that sanction the duke's treaty let us be quiet and "contented: if not, and Philip still persist, then let the sword "be drawn from the scabbard, let the purse strings be loosened, "and let money flow out in such a stream as to make the "soldiers drunk with our riches" †.

The final result was that on the twenty-third of August 1423 at four hours after sunset; this being the auspicious moment

* S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 1000. —Poggio, Lib. v., p. 136.—Cavalcanti, Lib. i°, *passim*.—Lib. ii°, cap. i., ii., iii. and iv.

† Cavalcanti, Storia Fior., Lib. i°, cap. ix., p. 18.

indicated by public astrologers; the truncheon of military command was formally presented to Pandolfo Malatesta with orders to invest Forlì: but these sages miscalculated; for he or his lieutenant according to Andrea Bigli and the annals of Forlì, as quoted by Muratori, though omitted by Florentine writers, was completely routed before that city on the sixth of September 1423. Whether this defeat is the same with that recorded by Morelli as having taken place just before the capture of Imola by the Milanese; when Niccolò Tolentino was discomfited at Ponte-a-Ronco about two miles from Forlì with the loss of six hundred cavalry; is difficult to say, because the date of the last is wanting. Cavalcanti's silence, although he seldom spares his countrymen, proves nothing, for he is also silent on that of Faggiola although he mentions Anghiari which occurred within the same district and nearly at the same time; and he tells us himself that he has not recorded all the events of this war*.

Florence allowed no time to pass idly: Braccio was engaged in case of need; the Baliàs of war and peace were appointed; special embassies excited the neighbouring Swiss and the Duke of Savoy against Philip; the malcontents both in and out of Genoa were encouraged to revolt, and Alfonso of Aragon then fighting for the crown of Naples was invited to assist in curbing the ambition of Visconte.

Alfonso's connection with Naples arose from the troubles of that kingdom after the death of Ladislaus: this last monarch's sister Queen Giovanna II. a woman as loose and licentious as himself, was along with her kingdom ruled by the favourite of the day; but feeling the necessity of a legitimate protector against the house of Anjou, she in 1415 married James of Bourbon Count de la Marche who soon asserted his right and more than his right to the sovereign power while he kept the

* Gio. Morelli, p. 51.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 1006.—Muratori, Anno 1423.

queen in confinement. Reinstated in authority by a popular tumult she resumed all her licentiousness, and Ser Giovanni Carraccioli became the favourite: after much contention James disgusted with his position returned to France and died a monk, while Louis of Anjou still contested the Neapolitan monarchy. Giovanna being hard pressed finally resolved to adopt Alfonso of Castille the youthful king of Aragon, Sardinia, and Sicily, and accordingly implored his aid; but the latter kingdom for many years had scarcely a name in Italian story; a succession of feeble princes, minors or oafs, had annihilated all external influence and engendered internal distraction. Frederic II., the sixth Aragonese king, died in 1368 leaving one child Maria, wife of Martin Prince of Aragon who dying in 1409 both realms were united by the king his father and descended in the following year to Ferdinand his sister's son by John of Castille whose son Alfonso or according to Mariana Alonso V. began to reign in 1416.

Young, warlike, and ambitious he attempted to wrest Corsica from the Genoese but being baffled by Tommaso da Campo Fregoso at the siege of Bonifazio, he quitted that enterprise at Giovanna's invitation and ordering his army to Naples in 1420 followed in person the succeeding year. By formally adopting him as her heir Giovanna reunited the two Sicilies and laid the foundation of those struggles for Italian sovereignty between France and Spain which closed in the monarchy of Charles V. accompanied by the annihilation of all republican liberty. The houses of Aragon and Anjou were now fairly at issue but as yet contended principally with Italian troops, and availing themselves of Braccio and Sforza's rivalry were followed by many of the native condottieri. Giovanna and her adopted son soon disagreed; she was tenacious, he ambitious of power; she would not yield and he formed the design of carrying her off to Spain; this was discovered, she kept herself safe at Capua and Aversa; he imprisoned Carraccioli and open

war commenced between them; Alonso was disinherited and Louis III. of Anjou adopted in his place*.

This divided the kingdom into two factions which soon spread over Italy and embraced its conflicting interests: the pope, Sforza, and Visconte were for Louis, Braccio for Alonzo, but still more busy for himself in besieging Aquila with the design of adding it to his own dominions. The Florentines also looked to an alliance with Alonzo as more conducive to their interests in consequence of his naval force and therefore laid the foundation of a treaty with him, at Leghorn on his way to Catalonia in October 1423†.

As the Milanese had already occupied Imola, Forli, Lugo and Forlimpopoli there was no time to lose, yet Florence made a fruitless attempt to reconcile Braccio with Pope Martin for the sake of placing him at the head of her army, but this failing, Carlo Malatesta Lord of Rimini was through his brother Pandolfo's means made captain of the republican forces, having under his command Lodovico degli Obizzi of Lucca, and Niccolò da Tolentino who seems to have been one of the most respected and sagacious of the Italian condottieri: besides these we find the names of Rinnuccio Farnese, Cristofano da Lavello, and Orso degli Orsini of Monte Rotondo, all officers of high distinction, with an army of seven thousand horse and three thousand infantry encamped under Forli. The citizens thus pressed had recourse once more to Philip who instantly despatched Agnolo della Pergola a leader of great reputation, with four thousand cavalry into Romagna, and the town of Zagonara belonging to Count Alberigo da Barbiano an ally of Florence was immediately invested. In this state of affairs, with a strong war and a strong peace party at Florence, the whole community was terror-struck about the fall and fracture

A.D. 1424.

* Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 201.—Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 1008.—Mariana, Historia de España, Lib. xx., cap. vi., xi., and xiii.—Madrid, 1678.

† S. Ammirato, Stor., Lib. xviii., p. 1008.—Muratori, Anno 1423.

of one of the porphyry columns at the Baptistry gate, an event deemed so portentous that great disasters were looked for and the peace-party became more clamorous in their denunciations*. The war, the taxes and the government were alike condemned; the Popolani Grossi were accused and perhaps not unjustly, of seeking fame and riches at the public cost, and the general burst of discontent at so much new and increased taxation is forcibly described by Cavalcanti. By these imposts he says the citizens' property became unstable; and as high winds blow the sand from one place to another so flew the people's substance from the weak to the powerful under the guise of taxation, rendered necessary by the war. This change of property he adds is further augmented by the marriage portions that are given and not less by those that are returned, which bring poverty and misery into families. As war was made, taxes became necessary, and they were placed, at the pleasure of the rich and powerful, on the shoulders of the poor and weak, who without enjoying the honours were made to bear the burdens of the state. "When the new scale of taxation was promulgated," continues this author, "weeping and wailing, wringing of hands and beating of cheeks, were everywhere seen and heard. 'O cursed country' exclaimed one 'why art thou the 'nurse of such men?' Another in naming him who caused his taxation cries, 'He knows too well that it is impossible for 'me to pay this unreasonable tax! If he wanted my home why 'did he not ask me to sell it? and for less than its value I 'would have surrendered all!'. A third cries out 'They count 'even my very mouthfuls, they will not leave me what is abso-'lutely needful, but deny me the common necessaries of life 'only to drive my family to crime and dishonour! O God why 'dost thou delay thy vengeance on these cursed people!' A fourth uttered imprecations on the authors of the tax, declaring it 'more tolerable to fly to the caves and the rocks where

* Gio. Cambi, p. 160.

'Totila's cruelty had driven their ancestors than remain in 'such a city.'" And thus throughout Florence the poor and weak bewailed these searching imposts while the powerful and their followers "adopted the maxim of Cecco d' Ascoli where he says '*It is expedient to be silent on what lies within: in the 'soul war, but peace upon the tongue.*' Their soul was glad for they saw the stream run smoothly to their mill; their gains were certain and to their heart's content, and everything conspired to gratify their wishes"*.

Neither discontent nor superstition were lessened by the intelligence of Braccio da Montone's defeat and death before Aquila, a real calamity to Florence which deprived her of probably the ablest captain in Italy. This celebrated leader fell in battle with the papal generals Jacopo Caldora and young Francesco Sforza, then about three-and-twenty, whose father had been recently drowned while endeavouring to save his attendant in crossing the river Pescara.

Meanwhile Count Alberigo da Barbiano closely pressed in Zagonara by Guido Torelli; one of the best, most loyal, and noble-minded captains of the age; and by Agnolo della Pergola; called loudly on Florence for assistance before a certain day, on which if not succoured he had agreed to capitulate. Some thought his loyalty doubtful, but Malatesta was reënforced and ordered to raise the siege: he was willing, nay eager to obey but the condottieri were of a different opinion and Lodovico degli Obizzi protested boldly and wisely against leaving the greater for the lesser conquest, the main object of the campaign for a secondary one and that doubtful from inclement weather and an inundated country. The silence of his companions proved their assent, but Carlo Malatesta perhaps irritated at this general disapproval of his design rebuked Obizzo in a taunting speech which as it inferred a want of knightly spirit in this leader, silenced his better reason so that he only mut-

* Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorent., Lib. i., cap. xi., p. 24.

tered, "If all do as I shall, few of us will escape, and still "fewer of the enemy will ever return to Lombardy."

Thus determined the army began to move on a tempestuous night when the sky was entirely clothed in heavy clouds from which had fallen a steady rain which so flooded the whole country that the horses were up to their knees in water: roads fields and ditches were equally covered; all indications of path or danger were obliterated; stragglers were numerous; every soldier was wet wearied and dejected; horses could scarcely stagger under the weight of knight and armour; the whole army was disorganised and in no condition to contend with a fresh and vigorous foe. Nevertheless Malatesta persisted, and on a powerful war-horse with truncheon in hand marshalled his soldiers, although from the depth of water no crossbows could be strung and were consequently useless in the fight: he then attempted to animate his men in an inflated speech that told lightly on veterans who knew both their duty and danger but flinched from neither*. Guido Torelli also addressed the Milanese but in a graver style and with surer prospects: placing a reserve out of sight on one flank under Agnolo della Pergola he steadily received the impetuous attack of Florence and ordering his troops to yield ground without disorder he gradually drew the enemy on until the reserve was able to charge their flank and rear; but as the Florentines were superior in number means of flight were studiously left open; a common practice in those days; and tired dispirited and beaten they were soon taken advantage of by the enemy. The Florentine army was finally dispersed, a great victory gained, three thousand two

* Cavalcanti here mentions a circumstance which he says is so marvellous that to himself it even appears a fable but because he heard it from men worthy of credence he writes it, more especially because he feels that nature has reserved to herself so much power that what she wills, she does and can do. Amongst the Florentine leaders was Count Antonio da Pontadera who had *a horse with horns*, which was of a high spirit and well formed, and he belonged to the troop of Messer Batista da Campo Fregosa. (Lib. iii°, cap. xviii., p. 60.)

hundred prisoners taken, but strange to say with the loss of only a few lives! Lodovico degli Obizzi stung by Carlo's reproof sprung foremost to the charge and died gallantly, fighting to retrieve the error of the man who had insulted him. The only other of note was Orso Orsini who fell from his horse and was drowned; but the prisoners were sufficient both in number and quality to render this battle famous over all Italy.

The Lombard writers, whom Muratori follows, say that many lost their lives and it is hard to conceive such a defeat without bloodshed: its cost in money the Florentines estimated at 300,000 florins, equal to more than that number of pounds sterling: Carlo Malatesta was made prisoner, Pandolfo with twenty-five followers escaped to Cesina, Niccolò Tolentino with forty more to Orivolo, besides a few others in divers quarters; and thus was the month of July rendered lamentably notorious in Florentine annals by the decisive but apparently bloodless battle of Zagonara. The day of its occurrence is doubtful, for amongst eight different writers six of whom are cotemporaries some do not mention the date and the rest vary in their accounts from the twenty-first to the twenty-ninth of July; so difficult is it to find the truth even about so simple and notorious an event *.

Had Guido instantly pushed into Tuscany Florence might have been reduced to extreme difficulty, but time was lost in dividing the booty and prisoners, while she was preparing; yet the shock was great and filled every body with anger and alarm. The great citizens who had counselled war felt the inconvenience of defeat where victory alone could have silenced their opponents, and public clamour was consequently loud against them: success would have been shared by all; but defeat was their own peculiar inheritance. Those who valued

* Gio. Morelli, Ricordi, p. 64.—Gio. Cambi, p. 160.—Poggio Bracciolini, Lib. v., p. 144.—Boninsegni, Mem., Lib. i., p. 23.—Buon. Pitti, Cronaca, p. 133.—Cavalcante, Storia, Lib. ii., cap. xiv. &c.—Ammirato Lib. xviii., p. 1012.—Muratori Annali, Anno 1424.

the comforts of a ten years' peace and strove for its preservation now goaded by new contributions and irritated by misfortune were unmeasured in abuse of the government: shops, churches, markets; every public place rang with vituperation, mockery, and complaints of what were termed their proud and wicked rulers. "Is this then," was asked, "is this the great and glorious "victory which our ten wise men promised us over the duke of "Milan? Is this the recovery of Imola and Forli? Is this "the vaunted correction of Visconte's pride and power? To "whom shall we now turn for assistance? Without soldiers, with- "out generals, without money, and almost without allies! To "queen Johanna? she whom these same wise men deserted and "by so doing forced her into the power of Aragon which has dis- "tracted her kingdom with war and deluged it with blood? To "the pope? They well know how he loves us for exalting Braccio "da Montone to the skies, that man who in the very blaze of his "glory was stricken as by a thunderbolt and miserably perished! "To the Genoese? whom we might have succoured and sustained "but whom we allowed to fall an easy prey to our most deadly "enemy!" Such exclamations were heard at every turn accompanied by a degree of public excitement so great as to cause the assembly of a general council where Rinaldo Gianfiglazzi an aged and respected knight of the ancient race in an encouraging speech implored his countrymen, whatever might have been the errors of government or other sources of existing evil, not to increase it by mere clamour when manly resolution and moral dignity were only required to meet it and overcome. The army he asserted was not destroyed, no blood had been shed; leaders were forthcoming, Florence had always stemmed by her own steady resolution the tide of every misfortune and nothing was required but money. This, he continued, could be easily spared by those who had it without oppressing the poor, if they would only discard their avarice; and it was but reasonable that men who enjoyed public power and public

honours should defend the public, not those who were excluded from both*. These words from a distinguished citizen of ninety years old had some calming influence on the public mind, and as the Milanese general delayed, more time was gained for preparation in Tuscany while the war was actively progressing in Romagna. A forced loan of 50,000 florins was immediately raised and several condottieri engaged, amongst whom were Oddo the natural son of Braccio da Montone, and Niccolò Piccinini his most celebrated pupil, both saved with four hundred lances from the battle of Aquila. Besides these, all the disarmed and dismounted prisoners released from bondage who had found their way into Tuscany were quickly reëquipped and remounted, so that a new force was soon in the field, but not before all the Florentine possessions in Romagna, except Castrocaro and Modigliana, had been captured, some by force but most by treachery; and so much had discord and defeat lowered Florence in public opinion that even women left their distaffs and took the field against her. Gentile the mother of Guido Antonio lord of Faenza actually summoned Modigliana at the head of her followers and attendant damsels, but was defeated and some of the latter paid dearly for their temerity †.

In the account of these transactions Macchiavelli, who follows Cavalcanti and is copied by Ammirato, gives us two instances worthy of record from their contrast; one of low treachery, the other of high-minded generous devotion, equal to any example of antiquity.

* Jacopo Pitti, Dell' Istoria Fiorentina, Lib. i., p. 14.—Cavalcanti, Lib. ii., cap. xxiii.—Macchiavelli, Lib. iv.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1015.—Dom. Boninsegni, Mem., Lib. iº., p. 23. This address is attributed by Macchiavelli, and by Ammirato after him, to Rinaldo degli Albizzi, but Cavalcanti a cotemporary distinctly gives it to Rinaldo Gianfiglazzi, and as the others produce no authority we have a right to follow him. Macchiavelli, who evidently made great use of Cavalcanti's work must have mistaken the words "*Il Magnifico Messer Rinaldo ebbe più amore alla patria,*" &c., as referring to Albizzi instead of Gianfiglazzi. (*Cavalcanti, Storia,* Lib. iiº, cap. xxii.)

† Gio. Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. x.

Zanobi dal Pino podestà of Galeata surrendered that fortress to Agnolo della Pergola, not only without resistance and treacherously, but at the same time strongly urging an immediate invasion of Tuscany where as he asserted, war might be waged with less peril and more profit than in Romagna. Agnolo although belonging to a class whose good faith was not proverbial, detesting such baseness, turned him over to his servants who when weary of other mockery fed him on paper painted all over with vipers, Visconte's cognizance, saying "Zanobi, thou art an arch-Guelph, but we will soon make thee an arch-Ghibeline:" as he received no other nourishment a few days put an end to his sufferings and in this cruel manner treachery was punished by the man who scrupled not to accept the treason! There is some pleasure though a melancholy one, in turning from this mixture of crime and barbarity to the conduct of Biagio del Melano governor of Monte Petroso, who after a gallant defence found himself caged up in the citadel and so begirt with fire and foes that every hope of preserving it had vanished. Making up his mind he hastened to throw a quantity of straw and soft clothing from the only unfired portion of the battlements and then taking up his two children cast them over on top of it while he exclaimed: "O cruel and perverse men take those "treasures that until this moment I have enjoyed as my own, "and for which, after you have taken them from me, I shall "be doubly remunerated by the fame and fidelity with which I "shall satisfy my republic! Certes, more than death I cannot "receive at your hands, wherefore this separation of the soul "and body which to others is common mortality, to me will be "perpetual life. I shall be an example to the weak and give "boldness and comfort to the strong; the former will be "taught, the latter rewarded with everlasting fame and glory." And so he remained and perished! Who perished with him we know not, they have received no meed of praise; but although every entreaty and endeavour of his enemies to save him proved

unavailing, all that could be saved of his property was restored along with his children to their friends, and the children themselves were ever after supported by Florentine gratitude *.

This state of affairs in Romagna was impatiently borne at Florence: twenty citizens were formed into a committee of taxation, and as the existing taxes had already crushed the less opulent, and reduced many to poverty who were excluded from any share in the government, it was determined in accordance with Gianfiglazzi's advice to throw the principal burden on those that shared the power and honours of the state, and a tax of twenty-five per cent. was imposed on their incomes. The noble popolani of the Albizzi or Uzzàno faction and almost all the powerful citizens were astounded at this resolution which sprang from the influence of the minor trades and all that new mass of citizens from country places which before the sedition of the Ciompi were gradually enriching themselves, and with a steadily increasing influence were in constant opposition to the popolani. The latter seeing themselves likely to be reduced by this law to that comparative poverty into which they had forced others by a long war and grinding taxation, made strenuous efforts in the councils where the Medici faction were gaining ground, to reverse the decree; but the Seignory however willing were never able to carry it. Exasperated at being thus compelled to take their share of the public burdens they opposed by every means the levying of their own new contribution while they pursued with cruelty all those who were still in debt for former taxes. Neither reason nor justice nor equity stopped their hand, and instead of sparing poverty as Gianfiglazzi recommended, the public collectors were now armed, force was used, struggles ensued, wounds were given and received, and many outrages committed by all parties, so that the city was convulsed with the action of a tyrannical adminis-

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxi.—Macchiavelli, Lib. iv.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1017.

tration. Unable to gain their point and knowing that the influence of the less opulent classes and artisans prevented it they resolved to unite in a series of measures to preserve their power for the future as they had done in past times. Lorenzo Ridolfi and Francesco Gianfiglazzi son of Rinaldo, both of their faction, were then in power, and the former being Gonfalonier their request for permission to call a meeting to consider the state of the republic although quite irregular was granted with a promise to support whatever they determined. Seventy principal citizens of Uzzàno's party accordingly assembled in the church of San Stefano al Ponte under the conduct of Matteo Castellani, Niccolo d'Uzzàno, Vieri Guadagni, who all belonged to the Ten of War, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi. Rinaldo being the greatest orator was commissioned to address the assembly and as his speech is a curious and vivid sketch of existing parties it will be considered in the following chapter where the domestic transactions of Florence are resumed*.

Meanwhile she again endeavoured to awaken a feeling of sympathy, good policy, and real self-interest amongst the Italian states and direct their views to ultimate consequences: to Naples she could not apply; but Albizzi and Guadagni were despatched to Rome, Palla Strozzi and Giovanni de' Medici to Venice; a third embassy repaired to the emperor, and with liberal promises of support invoked his presence in Italy to assume the Cæsarian crown; but like the hare and many friends Florence was forced to be contented with false commiseration and empty excuses from all. The pope had not yet recovered Perugia from the Fortebracci whom she still favoured: the Venetians were at peace with Philip and had no legitimate excuse for breaking it; and Sigismund answered in general and unmeaning terms. Nor was the being thus neglected her only misfortune; long peace had brought the manufacturing and commercial city of Florence into a rich and

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. i.

prosperous condition which war soon altered, but the contado and district do not appear to have shared this benefit.

There is some difficulty of conceiving, unless coupled with depopulation, how a rich and populous city placed in the centre of a fertile district could have failed to communicate its prosperous influence to the surrounding lands although in itself purely trading and commercial: but when we consider that war in most countries and especially in those times, was accompanied by a grinding taxation within from domestic friends; and unmitigated devastation without from destructive enemies, the two notions are not irreconcilable: when we also consider that corn though destroyed may be rapidly replaced, but that vines and olives when once rooted up are long in growing, longer in reproducing their fruits; that Florence was supplied by the rural districts with these necessaries, but depended more on commerce for her wheat, in exchange for manufactures; that these manufactures were principally of that costly description which found only a slender market in the state, and that she was thus almost independent of native agriculture; when all this is considered we may imagine the unusual picture of a flourishing capital with a distressed, impoverished, and almost deserted territory. Certain it is that through war pestilence and taxation the rural districts still remained so depopulated as again to engage public attention and a law was passed which exonerated all agricultural labourers who should return to their dwellings within two years, and who had been assessed for the *Estimo* retrospectively, from 1423, from any further taxation for a period of five-and-twenty years after the date of their return. One *soldo* per *lira* or five per cent. per annum being the only charge, and after the first five years if any public debt were contracted they could not without their landlord's concurrence be molested for it, either personally or in their agricultural instruments*.

* S. Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1018.—Gio. Cambi, p. 163.

The notice of this law by Cambi and Ammirato is somewhat obscure and much too brief; but the debts are evidently public without any relation to private transactions, except between the "*Oste*" or landlord, and his labourer, over whom he had great power, and whom he for his own sake took care should not be crippled by the seizure of cattle plough or person. It is to be regretted that wading as he does through every depth and shallow of Florentine treaties; which excepting as regards their main course have now little or no interest and even then vanished with the passing day; Ammirato scarcely and rarely touches on the more important and enduring points of national prosperity as it affected the peasantry and city poor; nor does he often dwell on the reasons for specific legislation; therefore it is only by detached and scattered notices culled from the private journals of the day that any conceptions, and those faint and unsatisfactory, can be formed of this interesting subject.

The Decemvirate of War notwithstanding their recent failure still imagined, as Ammirato asserts, that they could A.D. 1425. dictate the movements of a distant army from behind their desks, and therefore issued orders to Oddo and Piccinino to march at once into Romagna by the pass of Lamone. This road led down on Faenza, which Guido Manfredi still held for Philip, and they had orders to invest that city; yet as Cavalcanti who never spares his government, makes no accusation on this point but on the contrary attributes what happened to the confidence and impetuosity of Piccinino, the former writer may possibly err when he tells us that in despite of every remonstrance about the danger of threading narrow mountain passes in face of a warlike enemy and a hostile population in the depth of winter; the generals were forced to march*. Passing the river Lamone at Fagnano about two miles above Brisighella before dawn of day Piccinino left a strong guard

* Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1018.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xi.

at the bridge to secure his retreat and sending on Antonello da Siena's brigade of cavalry followed by a corps of infantry to crown the heights, advanced through the pass, strictly enjoining all parties to refrain from pillage until the way were won. He was everywhere disobeyed; plunder commenced, the bridge guard, eager to share, quitted their post which was instantly seized by the peasants and the bridge destroyed: thus engaged the fight closed thick around, man and horse, knight and armour, were pitched headlong from the rocks; there was no resisting distant missiles, and the mountain detachments on which their salvation depended instead of clearing the heights were busily engaged in plundering. The whole army with the exception of Antonello's corps was dispersed and almost annihilated; young Oddo according to Ammirato died fighting bravely; but according to Cavalcanti while vainly supplicating for his life: Piccinino with his son Francesco were made prisoners and carried to Manfredi of Faenza whose confidence he gained, and backed by the subsequent advice of that chief's uncle Carlo Malatesta at Milan, persuaded him to abandon the distant and mortal friendship of a single potentate for the permanent good-will of a near and undying republic *.

The consequence of this advice was a treaty with Florence which compensated in some measure for the recent disaster; but still fear and excitement increased and money became more than ever necessary: two new stocks were created called the "*Monte de' Fanciulli*" and the "*Monte delle Fanciulle*" † in which if a child's parents invested 100 florins it was entitled

* Poggio, Lib. v., p. 146.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1019.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xii. and xvii.—Cagnola, Storia di Milano, Lib. iii°, p. 25.—Corio. Hist. Mil., Parte v^a, folio 325.

† Can this name for the public stocks (Monti) be derived from the Florentine children's game of "*Cruscherella*" which some think, under the name of "*Ludere furfure*," was practised by the ancient Roman children? A large heap or "*Monte*" of bran is placed on the table, mixed up with which are the various pieces of money to be played for. This is divided into as many smaller heaps ("Monticelli") as there are players, who leaving out the person that distributed the heaps (because he

either at the expiration of fifteen years or on marriage, if beyond that time, to receive five times the amount and more in proportion according to the exceeded period. This was followed by two more forced loans of 100,000 florins each with severe penalties for non-payment including the forfeiture of the right to be heard in any court of justice *.

With these helps the war proceeded; a fleet of twenty-three Catalonian galleys arrived on the coast of Tuscany in April and there embarking a strong Florentine force and the deposed Doge Tommaso da Campo Fregoso, appeared before Genoa but could effect nothing like a revolt; so hated and distrusted were the Catalonian name and banner. Several descents were however made on the Riviera and divers places surrendered, so that with the exception of a very severe check at Rapallo the war in that quarter was tolerably successful. An unexpected attack by the Milanese in the squadron's absence nearly discomfited the Florentines at Sestri, but scared by the sudden shout of the troops; occasioned by their belief in the appearance of a real or imagined reënforcement under Aloiso dal Fiesco from Pontremoli; the Milanese gave way and were completely defeated with the then very unusual circumstance of seven hundred being killed on the field of battle, and more than twelve hundred made prisoners: had this victory the only counterpoise to so many misfortunes, been skilfully improved, Genoa might have been wrested from Visconte; but he soon ensured its fidelity by exacting numerous hostages of high rank and the fleet returned to Naples †.

is the last to choose) all draw lots for the first choice and so on in succession. After all have chosen each searches in his own heap for the money that fortune has sent him. (Vide "*Malmantile, Racquistato di Perlone Zipoli: better known as the painter Lorenzo Lippi.* Note Stanza v., Canzare iii[a], p. 128.) The slings of the Paris children gave their name to a great political faction, that of *Monte* might own as trifling a source.

* S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xix., p. 1020, &c.

† Paulo Interiano, Ristretto delle Historie Genovesi, Lib. vi., p. 172.—Giustiniani, Annali di Genoa, Lib. v°, p. 187.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1021.—Corio., Parte v[a], folio 326.

In Romagna Piccinino on being liberated had resumed his former command, a free passage was opened into Tuscany, and Faenza now a friendly town became the bulwark and rallying point of the republic in that quarter *. Opposed to Piccinino was Francesco Sforza who now though scarcely four-and-twenty years of age, began to make a conspicuous figure in Italian warfare; and the belligerent armies being nearly equal little was performed for some time on either side until an incursion by the Count of Anghiari on the territory of Borgo San Sepolcro obliged that place to demand Milanese aid from Romagna, and thus the war was gradually attracted to the Aretine provinces. Into this district the Milanese captain Guido Torelli carried Visconte's good-fortune by gaining two victories over Florence within the short space of nine days during the month of October 1425; one at Anghiari the other at Faggiola, making altogether since the commencement of hostilities no less than six victories with the sole reverse of Sestri †.

The Ten of War being somewhat doubtful of Guido Antonio lord of Faenza, placed Piccinino with four hundred lances in garrison there, two hundred under the nominal command of Guido himself, who being young and inexperienced was persuaded by Florence that the former was only stationed there for the sake of his great experience and counsel in war, therefore entirely subordinate; and the impatience of Piccinino at this arrangement was soothed by an assurance of his being the only safeguard of Faenza ‡. This was submitted to for a while; but when his period of service with Florence had expired and he found it not only unrenewed but himself undischarged, therefore left without pay or employment, he somewhat sternly demanded either instant dismissal or a fresh engagement. Receiving equivocal answers accompanied even by a notification of his being indebted to the state, he saw there was no time to

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxiv.
† Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1018.—G. Morelli, Recordi, p. 51, 68.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxvi.
‡ Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxiv.

lose, and opened immediate negotiations with Guido Torelli the Duke of Milan's representative: the latter was too happy to engage so famous a leader, and Florence now seeing her error sent ambassadors to him with the most liberal offers. His only answer was a loud laugh and the following fable. "Seignors there was once a man who to quench his thirst "under the heat of a burning sun plunged his face into a "pool of water and in the eagerness of drinking inadvertently "swallowed a frog: feeling the heat of the human stomach the "frog began to croak and the drinker made answer in his lan-"guage*. '*Tardi ciantes.*' 'You sing too late my friend.' "And that answer gentlemen you may carry back to your "countrymen from me; for I am the swallower and they are "the swallowed. Renounce all hope of my ever returning to "Florence; Count George and Lodovico de' Manfredi's fate "has taught me wisdom, who for their faithful service have "been cast into prison"†.

After this conduct which from some not clearly explained transaction was justified by many in Florence, Niccolò repaired to Perugia whence he continually harassed the Aretine territory and then offered Guido Torelli to scour the whole country up to the gates of the capital which he very nearly performed. Guido would however follow him no further than the Chiassa torrent and Piccinino continued his march ravaging all the country against the Arno's course up to San Mama and even to the Rassina, when feeling that a further advance unsupported would be dangerous, he rejoined Guido at the Chiassa and returned with him to Borgo San Sepolcro.

While Niccolò was absent Guido said to one of his officers "Do not be surprised Fabricius at my remaining here, for it "seems to me impossible that Niccolò in so short a time should "have changed from a foe to a friend, and if his anger were "really so great as to make such contrariety possible, even the

* The Provençal. † See next chapter, on the war of Marradi.

"shortness of time would scarcely admit of this public expression of hatred and inconstancy. I must keep this pass open "by all means, for there are in these days many more traps "set than nice to be caught in them: the sword no longer "graces the hand of gentlemen who seek for fame; low-bred "knaves, enemies to virtue, have now taken it; men who call "cruelty boldness; treachery superior knowledge; brutality "courage; avarice gain; and so forth. Wherefore my Fabri-"cius I will henceforth hold my own without loss or gain "rather than subject myself to the chance of all those dangers "that this base crowd is daily causing and practising"*.

The defection of Niccolò Piccinino was a severe blow which together with repeated disasters and growing taxation strongly affected the public mind, but ruled as it was by a powerful faction of great resolution and ability there was no weakness or vacillation in their measures. Rinaldo degli Albizzi was again despatched to Rome but with even less than his former success, for contempt and ridicule are not so easily forgiven as injuries, and Pope Martin complaining of both, was still implacable. Lorenzo Ridolfi had better fortune at Venice, but in the interim Piccinino with five more deserters were painted on the walls of the Bargello as traitors, each hanging by one leg with his name written beneath, and a price set upon the heads of all. Misfortunes now fell thick and fast, taxes became more intolerable, the repeated loans oppressive and tyrannical, public credit tottering, and when no more confidence existed several mercantile houses were compelled to disburse their ready money by the sole and absolute authority of government. The consequence of this was a panic with the simultaneous failure of Pallo Strozzi and eight other firms of high reputation: then followed a general uproar and universal outcry which the Seignory and Decemvirate with all their power found it difficult to pacify. Nevertheless these exactions were not less rigorously

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxvii. and xxviii.

enforced, while intelligence of Venice being about to join them assisted in allaying the storm and threw a gleam of doubtful comfort over the people *.

Lorenzo Ridolfi made repeated attempts to gain over the Venetians by representing them as the next morsel for the Milanese snake after swallowing Florence; but finally disgusted by their indifference he, in a conference with the Doge and Senate thus abruptly addressed them. "Seignors; Genoa "because we refused to assist her against Duke Philip made "him her lord; we if not aided by you now in our present "necessity will make him a king: but you, when all the rest of "us are conquered and none even if inclined are able to assist "you; you I say will make him an emperor." This plain truth which he had otherwise frequently urged in vain, startled them when thus shortly and distinctly announced; and the arrival of Carmagnola full of enmity against Philip confirmed their decision. Francesco Carmagnola was amongst the first soldiers, if not the first captain of Italy, and well acquainted with all the troops plans secrets and resources of Visconte, for his talents had recovered the duchy and he had long been that prince's chief favourite and counsellor. Seeing Guido Torelli and others preferred before him, his enemies more heeded, and himself deprived of the Genoese government, he retired from court, but having secret notice whether true or false, that Philip intended to poison him now fled to Venice and proved his sincerity, of which that government doubted, by this explanation. He also discovered many of Visconte's secrets and his designs against Venice after the fall of Florence, most of which seem to have been corroborated by confidential letters of Visconte unfairly made use of by the Florentine government and sent to Ridolfi for that purpose.

* Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1024.— Corio, Parte v^a^, fol. 326, who asserts that Piccinino proved treacherous to Florence by attempting to seize Cortona. It is not like him.

A gentleman named Perino Turlo who enjoyed the favour and confidence of Philip was taken in an attack on Faenza and being carried prisoner to Florence there received his liberty accompanied by great attentions and flattery and was finally dismissed (after declaring his belief that Philip wished the friendship of Florence) with an earnest entreaty to make peace between them. This was a scheme to ascertain Visconte's real designs on Venice in order to facilitate the pending negotiations with that state; but Perino soon returned with various propositions of peace which Philip he said most earnestly desired, and as a proof of his sincerity produced a *carte-blanche* besides several letters which the Seignory instantly despatched to Venice because they contained matter of infinite danger to that republic. Lorenzo Ridolfi lost no time in showing them, and the Venetians seeing the liberal offers therein made to Florence, the bold confidence of the Florentine ambassador in urging the league, the important communications and promises of Carmagnola, and the temptation of conquering Brescia which that captain had promised, determined to accept the alliance, and a treaty was completed early in 1426 *.

This league was to endure for ten years with conditions extremely favourable to Venice whose real sources of strength still lay in commerce, and whose geographical position gave her considerable advantages in treating with Florence to whom her coöperation both in force and situation was of the last importance in a Lombard war. The Venetian territory in that province from its recent acquisition had not yet become an integral portion of her national strength; it was but a lucky addition to an already consolidated power; a power still rising, absorptive, and hitherto unweakened by expansion, and therefore might be again lost without much dismay, because no national interests had as yet taken root or identified themselves A.D. 1426.

* Corio, Parte iv., p. 325.—Bonincgni, Lib. i., p. 26.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxv.

in any way with those provinces. But for Florence war with Milan was ever a matter of vitality, and especially after so many disasters; wherefore she eagerly consented to any conditions, and peace, truce, or war, were now equally submitted to the fiat of that cunning and unbending aristocracy. Venice also made some jealous terms about the Alexandrian trade, was moreover to have every conquest that might be achieved in Lombardy, and Florence all those in Romagna and Tuscany not already belonging to the church. Sixteen thousand cavalry and eight thousand infantry were to constitute the minimum of the combined force, and strong armaments of galleys on the Main, and flotillas on the Po, were to act vigorously against Genoa and every other tangible point of Visconte's territory. Pope Martin refused to join, but Siena followed Florence. Niccolò marquis of Ferrara accepted the command of the Florentines, and united with the league for the promised acquisition of Lugo and Parma if conquered. Amadeus duke of Savoy for his own especial objects, the lord of Mantua, and other Lombard seignors, all signed their names to it, and Francis Count Carmagnola was appointed Generalissimo *. The Venetians alone brought into the field eight thousand eight hundred and thirty horse and eight thousand foot, the Florentines six thousand one hundred and ten of the former and six thousand of the latter at an expense of four, and three florins a month respectively, for every soldier of each arm. To oppose them Philip had eight thousand five hundred and fifty horse and eight thousand foot, his whole revenue amounting to 54,000 florins monthly. Other authors and among them Cagnola, make the allied armies amount to much larger numbers and by the testimony of all there were full seventy thousand of both hosts at Casa al Secco; but Cambi gives the name and following of each particular leader;

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxix.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1026.—Poggio, Lib. v., pp. 151 to 155.—Bonincegni, Lib. i., p. 26.—Cagnola, Stor. Milan., Lib. ii°, p. 36.—Corio, Parte v^a, folio 326.

those of Sforza, Piccinino, Pergola and Tolentino being by far the most numerous of the private condottieri and equal to any of the sovereign princes *.

War then commenced and Philip withdrew his troops from Romagna: Carmagnola in performance of his promise marched directly on Brescia: by means of a secret understanding with the Avogadori family and other Guelphs all inhabiting one particular quarter of the city and all hating Visconte, he easily excited a revolt, and on the seventeenth of March made such a lodgment there, as immediately enabled him to lay close siege to the rest of the town. Brescia; one of the chief cities and most celebrated manufactory of arms in Italy was then divided into three distinct fortified districts each commanded by its citadel; and besides them a strong elevated castle which overlooked the whole †.

At first Carmagnola was only master of the ground he stood on, but the battle soon began with all the fury of an assault and all the bitterness of civil war until Francesco Sforza who defended it was forced to yield and the allies completed their lodgment. As this news spread to Milan and Florence the whole force of war concentrated round Brescia; Arezzo and Romagna were soon cleared of troops, and reenforcements poured in from every quarter ‡. One continued scene of war and blood; of fire, rape, and robbery, attracted the attention of all Italy for eight successive months; so that, to use the words

* Gio. Cambi Istoria, p. 169.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. xvii.—Poggio, Lib. v., p. 164.—Cagnola, Stor. di Milano, Lib. ii., p. 37.

† The celebrity of Brescia as a manufactory of arms was proverbial: when a man was completely armed it was not unusual to say "*He has all Brescia on his back.*" "*Il tale ha tutta Brescia adosso.*" In Lorenzo Lippi's poem of *Malmantile Racquistato* (Cantare primo, Stanza 30) we have, "*La dove Brescia romoreggia e splende,*" to signify a battle by poetically substituting the place itself for the weapons and armour made there.

‡ Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. xxxi. and xxxii. — Poggio, Lib. v., p. 155 to 158.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1032. —Cagnola, Lib. ii°, p. 36, who places the revolt and attack of Brescia in 1427.

of Cavalcanti, "never was any tavern so deluged with water as this unfortunate city was with blood." A ditch encompassed it so closely without that no succours could enter to mitigate the general suffering; within, nothing was heard but shrieks, weeping, and lamentation mingled with the shouts of struggling warriors and the clang of arms: with a masterly hand, almost incredible perseverance, and in face of the whole Milanese army led by the greatest captains of the day, did Carmagnola in a few months subdue the three citadels successively, and finally, aided by the Ghibelines themselves, in November 1426 that almost impregnable castle, the last stronghold of Visconte, submitted to his arms. A well-directed artillery which under the name of "*Bombarde*" was now becoming common in sieges materially assisted him, and the castle at the moment of its surrender is described as exhibiting the appearance of a porcupine from the innumerable arrows that covered its walls, all fixed in the seams of mortar; a fact that does more honour to the zeal than the training of Italian archers and crossbow-men *.

Thus fell Brescia as much to the shame of the Milanese commanders as to the glory of Carmagnola, for its capture was admired as one of the greatest military exploits of that age and added a noble territory to the Venetian republic.

Pope Martin who in consequence of his alliance with Philip had from that prince's necessities recovered not only the papal cities in Romagna but others that never had legally belonged to the church; at last bethought himself of reconciling the belligerent states and through his exertions and Philip's difficulties a general peace was signed at Venice on the thirtieth of December 1426, by which Savoy retained possession of all her conquests on the Milanese state; Brescia and its territory

* Corio, Stor. Mil., Parte v^a^, fol. 326. —Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. vii. and *passim*. —Poggio, Lib. v., p. 155, &c.—Cagnola, Lib. ii^o^, p. 37, who says with Corio that the citadel held out for thirteen months.

remained to Venice; all places captured from Florence were restored and her merchants relieved by Philip, as lord of Genoa, from the obligation hitherto imposed on them of embarking their English and French goods in Genoese bottoms. Milan was once more bound not to intermeddle with the affairs of Bologna, Romagna, Tuscany, or any state between that city and Rome, while Florence subscribed to the same conditions as regarded Bologna and that part of Romagna not subject to her sway *.

To the great satisfaction of Florence this treaty was proclaimed early in 1427. She had up to the ninth of November with little or no advantage expended 2,500,000 florins and her ordinary war expenses were estimated at about 70,000 a month †. Upon this Giovanni Morelli a cotemporary historian, exclaims, "*Make war, promote war,* "*nourish those who foment war; Florence has never been free* "*from war, and never will until the heads of four leading citi-* "*zens are annually chopped off upon the scaffold* ‡." So true as it would appear if any credit may be given to cotemporary writers though influenced by the prevalent spirit of faction, that private gain was the great aliment of foreign and domestic war in Florence. Many were doubtless excited by this motive; more there perhaps than elsewhere because those who could most benefit by war were the same that directed or at least materially influenced their country's councils and were likely to be personally interested either commercially or officially, and generally fraudulently, in the expenditure of public treasure. But such facts must be cautiously received, we should not be wholly, and we cannot always be justly swayed by them: neither ought the evidence of any single testimony open to and perhaps strongly imbued with the factious sympathies of the time, completely command our belief although with an

A.D. 1427.

* Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1032. † Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1033.
‡ G. Morelli, Ricord., p. 73.

apparently honest indignation it condemns the drama and the actors, or so much of either as was permitted to be publicly shown. The historian must take higher ground; he must look from the judgment-seat, contemplate the broad course and current of the age, thence form, and impartially pronounce his opinion.

In this view it would appear; although Morelli is not singular in his assertions; that whatever might have been the private views and motives of certain citizens the war itself seems to have been justifiable as well for the especial safety of Florence as the general independence of Italy. The power talents and ambition of the Visconti were always formidable, and to Florence alone was due the credit of baffling both their insidious and open advances to universal empire. The cause was good; the mode of conducting it essentially vicious; internal corruption led to external disasters, and an able and faithless adversary rendered errors dangerous: taxation pressed unequally and cruelly on the poor, until the new mode of contribution by the *Catasto* descended like an April shower on a parched and withering country. This law, described to Visconte as being calculated to insure a constant supply of money for the war, coupled with the loss of Brescia and general success of the allies was what principally induced him to seek a momentary respite in the form of peace, but which seems from the first to have been a mere stratagem to gain time, dissolve the allied army and afterwards take his adversaries unprepared. The Catasto worked for peace in another way, inasmuch as it threw the great burden of expense on rich and leading citizens who had almost escaped with impunity under the former method of taxation; this also seems to have sharpened their sagacity as to consequences, and made them consider that if Philip fell, the Venetians with their growing taste for continental power would be more dangerous as an unchanging ambitious state with steady views and determined purpose, than

the fluctuating mortality of the Dukes of Milan. The Venetians on the other hand although quite aware of the Florentine policy were anxious to secure their new Brescian territory, therefore interposed no obstacle to the negotiations *.

Such were the various reasons that facilitated the treaty of Venice; but the ink was scarcely dry when Philip either repenting of what he had done or pursuing his secret intentions, with the certainty of for ever losing Brescia if he executed the treaty, invited Carmagnola in person to take possession of Chiari a fortified town forming a strong outwork to that city on the road to Milan. Niccolò Tolentino suspecting treachery dissuaded his general from doing so notwithstanding orders from the Venetian Seignory, and his counsel was soon justified by information that the detachment sent on this duty was surrounded and cut to pieces within the walls. Visconte followed up this by the equipment of a large flotilla on the Po, the augmentation of his army with disbanded soldiers from the allies, and a sudden renewal of hostilities †. The astonished league almost immediately took the field with what troops remained, the general having orders to make fierce war while a strong armament was preparing to meet the enemy afloat and attack all the vulnerable points on the left bank of the Po.

The first encounter was at Gottolengo: Carmagnola had assembled his military cars, (which in those days were an indispensable portion of all armies for the rapid movements of infantry) and filling them with crossbow-men attempted to surprise the enemy. The Milanese however were too experienced for this and mustering their whole force attacked him unexpectedly while in some confusion on his march, and nearly defeated the whole army: Carmagnola however rallied his people and after restoring order, began an obstinate contest.

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. x.

† So short was the peace that neither Cagnola nor Corio seem to think necessary even to mention it.

The heat was excessive, the dust intolerable, the visors of helmets, the eyes and nostrils of the combatants were all choked up so that respiration became almost impossible. The Milanese were supplied with wine and water by the female peasantry, but such was the dust and obscurity that friend and foe seemed alike unknown and many of the allies received refreshment even from the hands of their enemies. Numbers fell from their horses overpowered by heat and dust; the plain was strewed with lances shields and wounded men; horses were galloping wildly about the field, some with saddles, some without; others had them turned under their belly, and many men threw off all their armour to escape suffocation. Piccinino was conspicuous beyond the rest in knightly daring, and his lance's point was felt throughout the throng; for this battle excepting amongst the infantry seems to have been a confused mass of single combats, more like the *mêlée* of a tournament than a scientific fight of disciplined soldiers; but the footmen in firm well-ordered battalions with lowered spears charged and withstood the charges of the men-at-arms killing both them and their horses.

When the struggle had lasted some hours and the allies were ready to give way, the Marquis of Mantua, hitherto deceived by false reports from a cowardly fugitive, came suddenly up with his followers and dashing forward saved all the cavalry and restored the day. The retreat was simultaneously sounded on both sides, each host had been three times broken, all but the infantry, who seem to have by their discipline preserved the rest *.

The ducal forces throughout these two campaigns were smaller in numbers than the allies, but better soldiers and with a greater number of more able commanders; yet they were unsuccessful for want of a common chief, while Carmagnola was implicitly obeyed, and all his advantages were gained by bring-

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap xii.

ing superior numbers against the weakest points of the enemy. To remedy this Visconte appointed young Carlo de' Malatesti of Pesaro as his captain-general; a youth of no experience but whose high rank and family reputation were likely to restrain the continual bickering of the chiefs.

Meanwhile Carmagnola angry at the somewhat disgraceful affair of Gottolinga conceived the idea of surprising Cremona a thoroughly Guelphic city and disaffected to every Ghibeline authority: with this view he took up a strong position at Sommo close to the town, intrenched and fortified his camp with a thousand war-cars as was his custom, and trusted to those within the city for ultimate success. Philip, for the above reasons, became alarmed, wherefore assembling a large force and instantly embarking on the Po he at once occupied and saved Cremona. A council of war was of opinion that the enemy should be attacked because Cremona secured their own safety in case of defeat and a victory would almost insure the fall of Mantua. To protect that place the army was encamped in an open space about half a mile wide contained between the city walls and the surrounding ditch, called "*Le Cerchie di Cremona*" the defence of which involved that of the city itself: but as the circuit was large a continual stream of armed peasantry came pouring in at their prince's call, ranged under various flags and banners and augmenting the aggregate of both armies to full seventy thousand combatants*. The allies were superior in the number of regular troops, the Milanese in experience and discipline, and held themselves fully equal to their antagonists independent of the peasantry: these however in the unsettled state of that time and country knew

* Historians do not positively say that this enormous force included the armed peasantry but from their own statements it can in no other way be accounted for, yet easily by that; because at the lowest estimate there were upwards of forty-five thousand men of cavalry and infantry alone in the two armies; Cagnola says positively that Visconte had thirty thousand and Carmagnola forty thousand men under condottieri. (Lib. iiº., p. 37.)

well how to handle their weapons though despised by the condottieri, who represented them to Philip as useful to fill up ditches and as convenient marks for exhausting the adverse missiles and sparing the regular troops; however their vast numbers would it was said excite fear, "the true harbinger of defeat."

Battle being resolved on, a corps of light-armed troops was sent forward to begin, but these were quickly driven in on the main body by Taliano Furlano one of the adverse chiefs who seeing the Milanese cavalry already formed and the whole country as far as the eye could reach covered with banners instantly turned to give the alarm. Carmagnola was soon in his saddle and personally directing the defence of a narrow pass protected by a broad and deep ditch which the enemy would be compelled to win ere his main body could be attacked. This was thickly lined with veteran soldiers and the road within it flanked by a body of eight thousand infantry armed with the spear and crossbow, and posted in an almost impenetrable thicket closely bordering on the public way. This pass was called "*La Casa-al-Secco*," and Agnolo della Pergola first appeared before it with his followers, supported by a crowd of peasantry*: the ditch was deep broad and well defended, and an increasing shower of arrows galled his people so sorely that he at once resolved to use the rural bands as a means of filling it. Driving the peasant multitude forward he ordered the regular troops to put every luckless clown to death who turned his face from the enemy; so that these wretches with the spear at their back and the crossbow in front fell like grass under the scythe of the husbandman. But they were more useful in death: by Agnolo's command both killed and wounded, all who fell, were rolled promiscuously into

* Ammirato who copies Corio gives the leading of this attack to Sforza. I have followed Cavalcanti who from his manner of relating it would appear to have been present at the battle, which happened on 12 July, 1427.

this universal grave, covered up with mould and buried altogether. Here were to be seen distracted fathers with unsteady hand shovelling clods upon the bodies of dead and wounded sons; sons heaping earth on their fathers' heads; brothers covering the bloody remains of brothers; uncles nephews'; nephews uncles'; all clotted in this horrid compost! If the wretches turned, a friend's lance or dart was instantly through their body; if they stood, an enemy's shaft or javelin no less sharply pierced them; alive, they filled the pit with sons and brothers, dead or wounded with themselves! They worked and died by thousands: even the very soldiers that opposed them at last took pity and aimed their weapons only at armed men. "And as a reward for this," exclaims Cavalcanti, "God lent us strength and courage." Nevertheless so many were thus cruelly sacrificed that the moat was soon filled to the utmost level of its banks with earth and flesh and human blood, and then the knights giving spurs to their steeds dashed proudly over this infernal causeway! It was now that the fight commenced, fresh squadrons poured in on every side and all rushed madly to the combat, for on this bloody spot the day was to be decided. "Here," says Cavalcanti, "began the fierce and mortal struggle; here every knight led up his followers and did noble deeds of arms; here were the shivered lances flying to pieces in the air, cavaliers lifeless on the ground and all the field bestrewed with dead and dying! Here too was seen young Carlo Malatesta, himself and courser cased complete in mail, and a golden mantle streaming from his shoulders! Whoever has not seen him has not seen the pride of armies!* Here was store of blood, and lack of joy and fear and doubt hung hard on every mind! Nothing was heard but the clang of arms, the shock of lances, the tempest of

* This is probably intended as a mere sarcasm on Carlo Malatesta's vanity and imbecility, for he had neither experience nor reputation in arms, either amongst friends or enemies who both blamed Philip for his choice of a general. (See Corio, Parte v^a^, p. 323.)

cavalry, and the groans, and cries, and shouts of either host! The sun was flaming, the suffering dreadful, the thirst intolerable; everything seemed to burn, all conspired against the wish of men, but the Cremonese women brought refreshments to our enemies."

The whole battle appears to have been concentrated in this pass so that numbers made but little difference on either side; nevertheless the Milanese chivalry were severely handled by the veterans in the wood who kept up a continual discharge of arrows on horse and man from the moment the ditch was passed, or else ran in with their lances and speared them. As many died from exhaustion and suffocation as from blows, for the battle was fought early in July and lasted from two hours after sunrise until evening; others it is said expired from the stench of carnage rapidly corrupted by excessive heat: Carmagnola forced by circumstances into the thickest fight was unhorsed and a hard conflict between those who tried to save, and those who wished to take him prisoner soon concentrated all the knightly prowess of both armies round his person: he was remounted, and dust and confusion saved him more than once, as they did Niccolò Piccinino, besides other leaders on both sides from being recognised and captured. The squadrons charged and recharged in dust and darkness; no standards could be seen; the voice alone revealed a friend; and when a retreat was sounded whole troops of cavalry ranged themselves under adverse banners in total ignorance of their own position. One attack was made by a strong detachment upon the baggage and for a while placed the allies in great danger; but being finally repulsed with the loss of five hundred prisoners a general retreat was sounded: the captives were equal, yet as the allies held their ground and saved the camp the victory of "Casa-al-Secco" was fairly claimed by Carmagnola*.

* Gio. Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. xiv. —S. Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1037.—Poggio Bracciolini, Lib. vi., p. 166. Muratori, Annali, Anno 1427.—Dom.

Philip previous to this battle had endeavoured to balance his ill success by a naval victory: the Venetian armament on the Po had been extremely active, and to check it he placed a strong squadron under the orders of Pacino Eustachio of Pavia with instructions to lose no time in bringing the enemy to action. The latter commanded by Francesco Bembo did not shun the encounter, which took place near Brescello; but losing three galleons in the commencement, Bembo doubtful of consequences, with that rapid and bold decision that marks a superior mind suddenly discontinued the contest and withdrawing all the crossbow-men from his remaining galleons manned them with the crews of others armed only with spears, swords, spontoons, battle-axes, and short arms of every description. These he placed in the van, while the galleons thus emptied were manned with crossbow-men alone and stationed close in the rear of his first line, with rigid orders under the penalty of death, to kill either himself or any other man that should turn from the enemy. He then renewed the attack.

With the Milanese in front; in their rear the levelled crossbows ready to shoot into the first vessel that gave way and themselves armed only with short weapons, the Venetian sailors were compelled either to fight hand to hand with their enemies or be transfixed without resistance by their own or adverse missiles. The Lombards were thus rendered the less formidable of the two, and the closer the fight the more safety, because free from the arrows of either squadron: thus excited the galleons were resolutely run along-side those of the enemy and lashed there, and the battle became more fierce and obstinate; the Venetian mariners, chiefly Greeks and Sclavonians, are described as displaying all the courage sagacity and savage fury of those nations.

The scene was appalling; no room for tactics, no hope in

Boninsegni, Mem., Lib. i., p. 29.— Bernardino Corio, Parte v., p. 327.— Gio. Pietro Cagnola, Stor. Mil., Lib. ii°, p. 36.

flight; man encountered man with the eye and hand of death; the struggle was personal, unrelenting, resolute; a struggle for existence, not for victory: the Venetians, pressed by a double danger had no other hope; the Greeks of Crete and Negropont with the Sclavonian crews performed such deeds as have been rarely equalled and never yet surpassed. Springing with the force of tigers on their prey it many times happened that when the Italian spear had pierced a Sclavonian body, the wounded man would seize and draw himself forward on the slippery staff until he grappled his enemy and then both rolled struggling into the stream below! Again, two running each other through at the same moment and sternly following up their thrust would close and wrestle as long as life endured, or fall while yet writhing into the bloody Po; for that great stream, full, and broad, and ample as it was, became strongly crimsoned! Pacino at last gave way, and with a few as yet ungrappled galleys made good his flight, but left fourteen captured vessels in the hands of Venice*.

After the battle of "Casa-al-Secco" Carmagnola, who as Cavalcanti asserts was now at the head of 50,000 fighting men, laid siege to Casal Maggiore on the Po and recaptured Bina which Sforza had surprised: he then reduced the former and both armies cautiously manœuvred, narrowly watching each other's motions until the beginning of October, when the allies were besieging Pompeiano a town situated about six miles from Brescia on the high road to Crema. While Malatesta was absent with Philip the Milanese captains had so placed their army as to impede the enemy's progress without risking a general engagement, but when Carlo returned he posted himself between Macalò (now Maclodio) and the allies, with an intention to succour the besieged. The two camps only four

* Poggio, Ammirato and Corio say that the Duke lost but eight galleys in this bloody encounter which occurred on 21 May, 1427.—Corio, Parte v^a, p. 327.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1034.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. xv.—Poggio, Lib. v., p. 163.—Muratori, An. 1427.

miles asunder were separated by what then was an extensive swamp, now a fertile plain; what was then fetid black and stagnant pools full of reeds and thorns, and swarming with snakes and every loathsome reptile; now abounding in corn and vines and mulberries. The high road from Orci Novi on the Oglio to Pompeiano and Brescia ran like a causeway through this waste and passed by a wooden bridge over a channel of deep water that connected the opposite marshes. Adjoining the swamp and bridge one side of the road was flanked by an extensive wood, so thick and wild and full of savage beasts, that both men and domestic cattle shunned it. Just at the bridge-head the road entered a sort of inclosed space or bason of solid earth in the midst of the marshes; a sort of trap from which no army once entered and cut off from the bridge could hope to escape except by the destruction of a superior enemy.

Niccolò Tolentino a leader of great influence having examined this ground advised Carmagnola to occupy the position while he and his friend Bernardino with a strong division of the army concealed themselves in the wood on the other side of the bridge and awaited Carlo's advance who it was supposed would run headlong into the trap. This suggestion was followed; the ambuscade was posted in the wood that night, and the other troops were under arms at daylight: Carlo Malatesta on the other hand whether for the reasons mentioned by Corio*

* Scarcely two authors agree in their accounts of this battle which was fought on the 11th October 1427. Cagnola, whom Corio copies, Corio himself, and Ammirato who copies him, say that Carlo was entrapped into fighting it by his wish of being present at a single combat between two soldiers one from each army to which he and his people went unarmed although no truce existed. Sismondi quoting Andrea Bigla, Simonetta, Redusio and others (which are also Muratori's authorities) gives a different account: Poggio and *Cavalcanti*, (the *latter* evidently unknown both to Ammirato and Sismondi) agree more nearly are both cotemporary authors, and Cavalcanti apparently an actor in the scenes he describes; wherefore as being least known and more minute, though somewhat poetical, I have principally followed him.

or a wilful determination to fight, was on his march by dawn of day: he soon crossed the bridge and entered the trap with loud shouts of "*Viva il Duca*" "*Viva il Duca.*" Carmagnola had marshalled his army in the shape of a crescent and slowly retired before him, but still deepening his centre as if fearful of the encounter. When he heard that all had entered he exclaimed, "*They are caught,*" and from a rising ground shortly addressed his people before the battle.

The instant that the enemy's rear was well over the bridge and engaged with their antagonists Bernardino darted like lightning from the wood and seized it at the head of a thousand horse: he was rapidly followed by Tolentino with a much larger force, but leaving the latter to defend the bridge he snatched up a heavy and well-pointed lance and with two hundred men-at-arms dashed deep into the Milanese rear with loud cries and great confusion. The two horns of the crescent then rapidly closed in; Carmagnola charged in front; the crossbows played unceasingly from every thicket; "*San Marco,*" "*Duca,*" and "*Marzocco*" * rescunded through the field, "The shouts of men the neighing of horses, the shock of lances, the tempest of swords was so great," says Cavalcanti, "that the loudest thunder might have rolled above unheeded. The wild beasts fled in terror through the woods and in these infernal swamps many swarms of serpents were seen rustling through the reeds at the unwonted uproar!" "O reader think how cruel must have been this conflict when so many animals enemies to our nature fled in so wild affright! All was terror and distraction; Niccolò held steadily to the bridge; many were driven into the marshes or dragged by their stirrups through them; the flights of arrows were sometimes so dense as to obscure the sun, and this deadly archery did infinite mischief; the air itself seemed changed and terrified, and this great multitude was full of groaning, blood, and death!" Every hope of victory at length vanished and the Milanese

* "*Marzocco*" was the lion of Florence and the usual battle-cry of her armies.

broke, surrendered, and fled in all directions: Carlo Malatesta and eight thousand prisoners laid down their arms, but strange to say, almost all were then or subsequently permitted to escape by Carmagnola; and this first sowed the seeds of Venetian jealousy *.

Guido Torelli, Piccinino, and Francesco Sforza escaped, and by the next morning all but four hundred prisoners had obtained their liberty: this produced strong remonstrances from the Venetian commissaries, upon which Carmagnola sent for the remaining captives and said to them "Since my soldiers "have given your comrades their liberty I will not be behind "them in generosity: depart, you also are free." This battle was the climax of Carmagnola's glory: whether he were unwilling to reduce his old patron too low, or was secretly influenced by the desire of peace and the recovery of his wife and children who were in Visconte's hands, or by less honourable motives, seems uncertain; but his subsequent efforts were insignificant. There is no doubt says Poggio that he could that day have destroyed Philip if he had retained the prisoners who were the flower of that prince's army; but according to the custom of modern soldiers they remained as lookers-on, intent only on dividing the booty and let the men-at-arms go free †.

None of this was lost on the Venetians; but not a reproach was heard, not a sentence uttered, no sign of displeasure reached his ear: he could still be useful, was adding bit by bit to their conquests and as yet in too formidable a position to be struck: on the contrary, as was their usual custom when meditating the sacrifice of a victim, more deference was shown him; more respect paid him; but he was not forgotten.

The liberated army of Milan was soon remounted equipped and in the field; for most of these battles involved the waste

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. xvii.—Corio, Parte v^a, p. 328.—Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 168.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1041.—Muratori, Anno 1427.—Sismondi, vol. vi, p. 257.—Cagnola, Stor. Mil., Lib. ii°, p. 38.

† Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 168.

of more money than blood as dead men paid no ransoms, and Visconte had ample resources. He nevertheless became alarmed at his actual position and sought new strength by rousing the emperor Sigismund against Venice, by marrying his daughter Maria to the Duke of Savoy, and by stirring up the poor remnants of the Carrara and La Scala families to agitate Padua and Verona. He met these difficulties with an able head and a bold countenance, but was in fact a strange character and differing according to cotemporary writers from all other men. No stability, no confidence, no belief, no firmness of purpose; mutable as the wind, no regard to promises, unsteady in his friendships, and prone to sudden antipathies against those who were apparently his dearest friends: cunning, sagacious, vain of his own judgment, despising that of others: whimsically pacific and warlike by turns; fond of a solitary life he was rarely visible but governed through his ministers and temporary favourites, and thence no doubt proceeded many of his worst misfortunes*.

A slight check before Genoa, more important from the heroic death of Tommaso Frescobaldi than from any other injury, in some degree damped the joy of Florence for this recent victory. Frescobaldi had distinguished himself as Florentine commissary in the Aretine district by an able and vigorous conduct under very trying difficulties and a total neglect of him by the government: nevertheless he perseveringly withstood the Milanese forces until the siege of Brescia relieved him. Indignant at this treatment he personally and boldly reproached the Ten of War with their conduct, and in no measured terms: Niccolò d'Uzzàno tried to soothe him and was respectfully heard; but Vieri Guadagni so impatiently rated him as to be told by Tommaso that nothing but his high official dignity was a protection from personal chastisement. Niccolò who fully appreciated the worth of Frescobaldi reproved Vieri for his intemperance

A.D. 1428.

* Poggio, Lib. v., p. 361.

and that citizen was soon after sent as commissary to conduct the war against Genoa where for a while his vigour and ability were no less conspicuous than before. At last Fregoso and the Florentines were defeated in an attempt to enter Genoa and Tommaso, who fought to the last, after all were routed was wounded and made prisoner. The governor, a stern and cruel man, promised him life liberty and reward if he would divulge his government's secrets and say who within the city of Genoa were in league with Campo Fregoso; but the alternative of death and torture if he refused. To this Frescobaldi firmly answered, "Obizzino, if for my silence on the subject of state "secrets thou wilt put me to death, abandon all hope of knowing "those things that duty to my country and constancy of pur- "pose, even did I know them, would prevent my revealing: "and as I have no hope of mercy from thee so thou needest "not expect any disclosures from me, for even if I were informed "I would not tell thee." He was instantly put to the torture, his wounds broke out afresh in the agony; but he died without uttering a syllable. A noble example for his living descendants!*

Florence now wished earnestly for peace because she could no longer expect to gain anything by war and a continually augmenting expense was exhausting her resources: the more equal action of the Catasto promoted this wish because the rich and great now bore the principal burden. They again argued, and rightly too, that if war continued Philip must lose his state, which Venice, not Florence, would gain by the very conditions of the league, and thence with augmented power become more formidable than Visconte himself, for there would then be none but Florence to oppose her. Naples, ruled by a weak licentious woman was distracted; the pontiff would not move; the emperor would be shut out by Venice who held the keys of Italy, and France was far too distant: better, it was once more repeated,

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iv°, cap. ii°, and iv°.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1043.

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to have an unenduring enemy than an everlasting and overpowerful neighbour. Venice had now acquired a taste for Italian conquest, and the petty acquisitions of Carmagnola were still adding to her territory; but her suspicions were awake and she finally consented to treat while Visconte was really anxious for peace in consequence of his recent overthrow. The sincerity of all parties soon produced its effects and the cardinal of Santa Croce at last restored tranquillity by accomplishing the signature of a treaty at Ferrara about the middle of April 1428 after nearly five years of constant hostilities. The cost of this long and ruinous war according to Cavalcanti amounted to three millions and a half of florins, according to Macchiavelli three millions and fifty thousand *.

The Florentines gained nothing by it but a heavy debt and the institution of the Catasto; the Venetians in addition to Brescia gained part of the Cremonese state with Bergamo and its territory as far as the Adda which now became their western boundary. Thus says Cavalcanti by the operation of wicked citizens our people were loaded with poverty, the Venetians with riches and territory; and pride and covetousness was the cause of all †.

CONTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—England: Henry V. until 1422; then Henry VI.—Scotland: James I.—France: Charles VI. and VII. the last in 1422.—Castile: John II.—Aragon: Ferdinand of Castile to 1416, then Alfonso or Alonso V.—Portugal: John I.—German Emperor: Sigismund of Luxemburg.—Greek Emperor: Manuel II. to 1425; then John VII.—Ottoman Emperor: Mohammed I. to 1421; then Murad or Amurath II.—Naples: Giovanna II.—Sicily: Alfonso or Alonzo V. of Aragon.—Papal See vacant from 1415 to 1417; then Martin V. to 1431.

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* Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. xviii.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1043.—Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 166.—Corio, Parte v., p. 328.—Gio. Morelli, p. 78.—Gio. Cambi, p. 173.—Dom°. Boninsegni, Mem°. della Città di Firenze, Lib. i., p. 30.—Macchiavelli, Stor. Fiorentina. Lib. iv.—Muratori Annali, Anno 1428, —Cagnola, Stor. Mil., Lib. ii°, p. 39.

† Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. xix.—Macchiavelli, Lib. iv.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FROM A.D. 1426 TO A.D. 1430.

TAXATION is requisite, but all taxation is essentially unjust because it can never be fairly distributed and strikes hardest on those who are most helpless and indigent: by obliging all who enjoy more than the necessaries of life to abridge their superfluities, thus diminishing employment and with it the means of existence, taxation descends with increasing force through the various classes of society and falls with a crushing weight upon the poor. These possessing no superfluities have both their moral and physical sufferings unduly augmented, and being deprived of a sufficiency their lives are shortened in the trial; for though they seem to wither by the hand of God man accelerates the blow. Yet extreme evils generally, and often too roughly, work out their own cure; the war just finished brought war's usual effects, expense, debt, and unjust taxation; for that of Florence was disgracefully abused and painfully unequal in its distribution: nevertheless this very excess of suffering ended like the pains of labour, in great consolation; and the birth of a new mode of taxation under the name of "*Catasto*" spread a smile of satisfaction over the whole commonwealth. A.D. 1426.

But before we describe this celebrated act of national justice; which was chiefly due to the policy or patriotism of Giovanni de' Medici; it will be expedient to offer a short recapitulation

of some earlier events connected with that subject. The revolutions of 1393 and 1394, the timidity or prudence of Vieri de' Medici; the banishment of Alberti, Donato Acciajuoli, Alemanno di Salvestro and others of the Medici family; together with the failure of the Cavicciulli and Ricci conspiracy in 1396, and that of Galeazzo Visconte in 1400, all combined to add strength and firmness to Maso degli Albizzi's able but despotic and unscrupulous sway. Not that he or any leaders of his party usurped or held the regular magistracies illegally, but they managed to fill the election purses with adherents' names, and not only secured their own appointment to every Balia but contrived also to retain the power of proposing these dictatorships whenever it suited them. Their aim was to perpetrate despotism by repressing the middle and lower classes of artisans and subduing their leaders amongst the noble popolani, such for instance as the Ricci, Alberti, and others; but more especially the Medici, who had acquired a dangerous distinction by the reputation of Salvestro and Vieri, by popular attachment and by the enmity of their political antagonists. This policy was for a while most rigidly pursued, but finally the confidence arising from undisputed power, disagreements amongst themselves, mutual jealousy, and above all the death of Maso degli Albizzi, altogether slackened their vigilance, and the Medici, who had been gradually increasing in opulence and public estimation, became again politically conspicuous and were silently creeping into the highest official dignities, when as it were to crown their triumph Giovanni di Bicci appeared as gonfalonier of justice in 1421. His assumption of this high office had been foreseen by means then well known in the political tactics of Florence, and Niccolò da Uzzàno strenuously endeavoured to prevent it: but either from jealousy of his position as the most powerful citizen, or confidence in the mild and upright character of Giovanni, or an undue reliance on their own power, Uzzàno's advice was unheeded and the appointment took place.

Nor did any immediate consequences ensue; Giovanni was neither revengeful nor, according to most accounts, ambitious; nor greedy of personal gain: he probably saw more evil in the means of revolution than utility in its accomplishment by the abasement of a political adversary; the public good seems to have been his great work and he accomplished it more quietly and effectually by milder ways. Nevertheless this reopened the door of public honours and employment to that family, and his son Cosino who had previously conducted some diplomatic missions became one of the Seignory in 1428: but it ended as Niccolò da Uzzàno had foreseen in the Albizzi's destruction and ultimate downfall of their party *.

The exaltation of Giovanni inspired new hopes, not only in the artisans, but amongst a large mass of superior citizens who were tired of a proud and imperious oligarchy regardless of public good and disdaining to conciliate the people by any boon that might soften the recollection of all that excessive rigour which was made use of in the establishment of their existing authority. Neither were these oligarchs contented with negative evil nor the exclusion of a large mass of citizens from every chance of official employment, but even the latter's possessions were no longer safe from rapacity and extortion; from undue and unjust taxation. In such a state of public feeling Giovanni grew daily more popular, and as the acknowledged centre of all men's hope became the confessed though involuntary head of discontented citizens.

The two wars, against Philip and Ladislaus, increased public dissatisfaction, not however so much from aversion to hostilities as arbitrary taxation imposed by the sole will of the ruling faction. The wealthy were spared and the poor oppressed; war was said to be made not for public benefit or necessary defence, but without any real occasion, to enrich rulers and abase

* Ammirato, Lib. xviii., p. 992. — Filippo di Nerli Commentary, Lib. ii., p. 35.

the people; and this cry was loud deep and general*. The effects of such policy on public opinion have already been noticed† as well as the "Uzzaneschi's" determination to devise some mode of retaining that power and licence which they had already enjoyed for two-and-thirty years‡. Rinaldo Gianfiglazzi had died in 1425, but Niccolò da Uzzàno was still vigorous and both able and willing to take a lead in that financial agitation which in 1426 convulsed all classes; the rich by the last severe imposition of twenty-five per cent. on their incomes; the poor by positive suffering and inability to pay up their arrears. The former were resolved if possible to preserve their ancient exemptions and repel the audacious crowd; men who while daily gathering political strength had by their influence in the councils not only nominated the committee of finance which imposed the new tax, but defeated every attempt at its abolition.

For this growing power of the plebeians the Uzzaneschi blamed those in office, as by a careless admission of every new upstart to civic honours they had filled the palace with men of yesterday who only looked for able leaders to effect an entire revolution§. Thus determined they waited for a favourable occasion and this came with the election of Lorenzo Ridolfi and Francesco Gianfiglazzi respectively as prior and gon-
A.D. 1426. falonier of justice in July 1426. Seventy principal citizens of their party assembled by permission of this chief magistrate in Saint Stephen's church, where Rinaldo degli Albizzi in a long oration implored them to sink all former quarrels in oblivion and unite for the common good, because said he disunion had given them such colleagues in political power as their ancestors would hardly have accepted for domestic servants. "You," exclaimed Rinaldo, "are the community; "you are the honour, you are the council of this city, therefore

* Nerli Commentari de' Fatti Civili di Firenze, Lib. iiº, p. 36.
† Vide ch. xxx., p. 74.
‡ Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1026.
§ Ibid, p. 1027.

"your acts are those of the commonwealth. Through enmity "to others you have injured yourselves; you have made bad "worse, heaped errors on errors, and filled the election purses "with so many vulgar and mechanic names that their voices "out-number all your suffrages. Recollect that in every com- "munity there is a never-ending hatred existing between the "noble citizen and artisan; not that we ourselves are strictly "speaking noble; but we are noble compared with those whom "we have made our fellows; men from Empoli, the Mugello "and elsewhere; some even who came here as servants and "are now our equals in the public government. Would that "they were content with that; but they want to be masters "and to make *us* their servants! Why, they are not only eager "to favour every measure that may injure you and other citi- "zens but are the first inventors and promoters of them. If "there be a question of war they support it, and whisper "amongst themselves, '*We* cannot lose; because if it succeed "we shall be along with them in office and will fill the election "purses with our own people—and if not, what is it to us? "*We* run no risk; our shops bring as much in as goes out; "we have neither lands nor funded property, wherefore our "taxes are small and war to us is more useful than injurious. "Our hope of gain will be the hope of victory, because then we "shall share in the spoils; and moreover the city during war "is full of soldiers who come to equip themselves; and money "is plentiful, and profits good.' Citizens," continued Rinaldo, "consider that your ruin is their glory and exaltation; the "war of wolves is the peace of lambs (and they call themselves "the lambs and us the wolves,) therefore they oppose all your "measures and seek your ruin. They have no love for the "republic, it costs them nothing; they know not even whence "they came: how can they love others who care not for their "own? I have seen a peasant from the contado come to visit "his son in Florence and have heard the son thus welcome

"him. 'When did you come? When will you go?' By
"which he plainly showed that his father's absence was by far
"the most acceptable. Again I have seen others who forbad
"their parents to acknowledge them, ashamed of being known
"as the children of ploughmen and day-labourers! Well then
"what love can such as these bear to you or your republic
"when they have none for their own nearest kinsfolk? Certes
"those who believe in a peasant's love are most lamentably
"deceived. Between gentle and simple there is no difference
"at birth or death, but in their intermediate life and habits the
"difference is immeasurable, and mostly in their affections;
"the gentleman loves and the peasant fears, and between the
"peasant and mechanic I say there is little dissimilarity, so
"that you may see where your own dissensions have placed
"you. Your original territory did not reach beyond Galuzzo
"and Trespiano, and all since acquired can scarcely be called
"your dominion, but rather that of the people whose faithful
"vassals these upstarts were before they removed to Florence;
"wherefore their affection is rather with our primitive enemies
"than in your republic and they naturally desire your ruin.
"You must protect yourselves: do you not see that they have
"imposed extravagant taxes on all that hold the reins of
"government? Do you not see that these will not satisfy
"them? You have neither demanded new customs nor strange
"laws, but ancient long-standing native usages! In cases of
"extreme taxation appeals have ever been received and listened
"to, in order that unreasonable impositions might be corrected
"and abated; yet these people will admit nothing, but want
"rather to set aside our ancient habits of appeal. You are
"aware that long-established custom is identical with law and
"whoso departs from law renounces life and civil liberty. They
"only seek your ruin: do you believe that they forget the
"brutality of their fathers? that they know not how their per-
"fidy trampled down your progenitors? Search your cloisters

"and there you will find the festering bodies of your sires and "kinsmen! Look at the palace walls still stained with the "blood of so many and *such* citizens that by *their* hands all "Italy might have been bravely governed! What place is "there that was not filled with the cries of widows and of "orphans? with mourning, with tearful eyes and dolorous "aspects? Do ye not now hear the voices of wretched mothers "and orphans, and deserted children crying aloud unto you, "'*Have no companionship with those who have murdered our* "*husbands and our fathers the honour and glory of this repub-* "*lic.*' Do you not hear them? Where is the place that shows "not marks of their devastations and burnings? Forty unhappy "months and more did they hold this people in servitude! "How many exiles? how many perpetual banishments? how "many noble citizens were falsely accused and fell by the axe, "the knife, or the poison? and every foreign city was filled "with your unhappy forefathers! Wherefore I beseech you "not to persevere in your dissensions lest they prove the match "to such another fire as Bardo Mancini extinguished (in 1387). "Commit no more errors, have no fellowship with those that "want to trample you under foot and already indicate your "danger by their doings. You have mingled the clods of Cer- "taldo Figline and such towns with other useless races in your "government and not even to your own peasantry have you "vouchsafed the honours of the magistracy; but a barbarous "mixture of pedlars and hawkers with their shops on their "shoulders have carried your standard of justice! To such as "these you have added admonished citizens and rank Ghibe- "lines who as you well know were always enemies to Guelphic "rule; and you have neglected your own nobles! This you "will say was for the insufferable pride of their ancestors: "I do not deny that such pride was abominable and insuffer- "able, but the present vexation of vile plebeians is at least "equal to the past haughtiness of our ancient nobility. Shall

"we now term it intolerable pride if one of the Bardi wishes "to be greater than the grandson of Piero Ramini or the son "of Salvestro the baker? Is it not just that the Rossi should "precede the Stucchi rather than the Stucchi the Rossi? or "that a dignity should not be denied to the Frescobaldi which "is granted to Stuppino? * But our nobles do not contend "for this, they ask only equality, and I say that this is not "pride but merely natural rights commanded by the greatness "and nobility of our republic. And yet you have neglected "the nobles, and of your enemies have you made companions! "I say that in order to preserve your own station and influence, "means must be found to clear the election purses of the "low depravity of these evil men: you know that the city is "governed under the Guelphic name, and by your insensate "actions you have allowed a horde of barbarians to share the "government along with you. You know that the city is divided "into three conditions of men; namely, the '*Scioperati*'† the "merchants and the artificers: you are likewise acquainted with "the laws of your ancestors which declare that in the number "of priors there shall be two of the minor and the rest of the "major arts and scioperati, and the same in the colleges. But "in the council of the people where all votes centre and where "all acts are terminated, there are out of twenty-one trades, "seven of the greater and fourteen of the lesser‡. Now take "notice that there, two parts out of three are of the inferior "arts, and the remaining third, only, of the superior; and "thus the law is infringed. And so you will find every public "council in like manner corrupted, the law unheeded, your "measures unsuccessful, and the people hating you but with

* These were names of certain low-born citizens who were then making their way into the magistracy.

† The *Scioperati* were those who lived on their rents or funded property or other means, without exercising any profession trade or official employment for a livelihood.

‡ The councils, it will be remembered, were that of the *two hundred;* of the *comune* which I have translated "*Common Council;*" and that of the people.

" a majority of the votes in their hands; and thus do you peril " your own power and the public liberty! The remedy now " sought for is, that these fourteen trades should be reduced " to seven, and their place in the government be filled by the " *Scioperati* and greater arts, for thus we shall exclude them " from the magistracy and none of your measures will be " defeated *. You know how our fathers strengthened them- " selves by reducing the two additional arts (in 1382) let us " follow their example, and be ye sure that if the reduction of " two so helped them what may we not expect from a diminu- " tion of seven? It will enable us to restore the old nobility, " now no longer formidable, to their just place in the common- " wealth and thus increase our own power of keeping down the " people who can never stand against such union: and lastly " it is the province of reason and prudence to make a various " use of men in various times and circumstances; to our an- " cestors their abasement was expedient; and so to us is their " restoration †. All this is easy to accomplish because the " votes will be in your favour; for as inexperienced men they " know not what they want except to accomplish your ruin. " They will believe that with a diminished number of trades " the amount of public power will not be lessened and if two " arts be reduced to one that single one will enjoy two offices; " which however may not be; nor will their expectations be " realised; for as the comments of him who made the text are " with reason preferred to every other gloss, so shall our own " will, and our own interpretation of the law, be directed to " one and the same object. All this is reasonable. But as a " proof of their ignorance take the mode in which they acted " when Bardo Mancini was in office: they then had half of " the public honours and often the Gonfalon of Justice ‡, and

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. ii°.

† Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1028.

‡ This seems to be an error. When Bardo effected so many reforms in 1387, the minor arts had already in 1382 lost their privilege of enjoying half of the public magistracies and were reduced to one third. Bardo

" yet they all voted like fools and lost that which the law had
" both promised and given to them! Examine their works
" and you will find that they are a brutal and a cruel race: in
" 1378 and 1380 they made a clear demonstration of them,
" for cruelty reigns in the minds of those who by nature are
" base, brutal, and cowardly; wherefore you may be assured
" that fear combined with poverty of intellect will lead them
" to vote blindly against their own interests. Knights and
" illustrious citizens, if you imagine that past times are no
" guarantee for the present because the people took their
" remedy when the office of gonfalonier and their own strong
" position in the magistracy were taken from them, and that
" by such demonstration they showed themselves more intelli-
" gent than their predecessors; wherefore you infer that this
" great work for the restoration of our city's honour will not
" succeed *. Now I say that to new cases new rules must be
" applied, and different means and unwonted measures must
" be adopted: this emergency does not entirely resemble
" those of old; neither is there that force in the present
" people which so conspicuously moved their predecessors in
" past times: besides, all laws however just and efficient, are
" still subject to force, and the sword becomes the last and most
" competent arbitrator. Now, amongst *you* this war has
" placed the military force and government, and where that is
" there will doubtless be found a remedy for every danger,
" because the same citizens hold along with the offence of the
" enemy, the defence of the commonwealth in their hands:
" what else then is necessary but to collect two or three
" thousand infantry, pretend to make a secret expedition,
" occupy the public place and all its avenues, on the pretext of
" military inspection; and then let the Seignory rouse up the

Mancini reduced them to one fourth. (Vide Ammirato, Lib. xiii., p. 785, and Lib. xiv., p. 759.)

* This reduction of power and the consequent tumult of the Ciompi occurred in the gonfaloniership of Antonio Busini and Rinaldo Gianfiglazzi in 1382. See vol. ii.

" palace itself and demand all the votes under cover of the " sword? In this way we shall come to the right conclusion. " You are certain that the palace is with you because this " meeting is not unknown to the Seignory: your gonfalonier " is the illustrious knight Lorenzo Ridolfi, and from him and " from Francesco Gianfigliazzi you have permission to hold " it. How then, can you doubt of what is necessary being " done for you? It only remains to settle the plan and follow " orders and choose our time. What honour could so worthy a " knight as Lorenzo acquire, if after thus favouring us he did " not follow up his work? Who can suppose that what he has " already conceded has been done so in ignorance or without " deep consideration of all the perils of such an enterprise? " This is not to be believed nor apprehended; for by nature " he is sagacious, skilled in law and science, and most cele- " brated for his learning; and where natural ability unites with " profound knowledge and experience it may be supposed that " every provision has been made from beginning to end, and " that the end of such beginning will be admirable and fortu- " nate; and thus you should have no doubt of every precaution " having been taken to conduct a great enterprise to its suc- " cessful conclusion. But what are you doing? What are " you thinking of? Why lose a moment in recovering your " liberty along with the assurance of enjoying your fortunes " quietly with your families? Of again taking pleasure in your " expenses and of being the real dispensers of your own pro- " perty? Doubt not that if you continue negligent and trust " alone to vows and prayers like weak and foolish women, " you will fall from your high places and perish. '*Ripe pears* " *do not fall into the mouths of lazy pigs,*'* and even irrational " creatures tell you what to do, for how often do you see your " dogs in fierce battle under the dinner tables for things of no

* "*A Porco peritoso non cade la pera mezza in bocca.*"

" moment? To you then, who are men in reason and intel-
" lect, the defence of honour, liberty, greatness, and every
" other enjoyment is not only expedient but necessary; and if
" need be we must not avoid but enforce our cause with arms.
" But to what will these vile leaders resort? Why the bakers
" will arm themselves with their stakes and lament their injuries
" in company with your slaves*; and so the rest will with
" their customers; they will complain and sorrow at your
" glory; and this is the way they will oppose you. What then
" are you about? For Heaven's sake awake and no longer be
" guided by such gentry! Fortune favours the bold and
" shuns the timid; but she rouses the sleeper with all the
" bitterness of wo. I have now touched on eight principal
" points each of which would alone form a great portion of the
" matter wherein you have acted so indiscreetly. Wishing to
" reduce these disorders to their natural level and to ancient
" practice I first insisted on public and private enmities being
" buried in oblivion and on all being of one mind and one will.
" Secondly I asserted that with your dissensions and rivalry,
" each striving to become more favoured than his neighbour in
" the eyes of your common enemy, you have abandoned all
" well-considered order only to commit new errors; so that
" their names fill the election lists and they cordially unite in
" your destruction. You have been told why they thus hate
" you; you have heard of the mischief and cruelty of their
" fathers when the government fell into their hands; and of
" the banished, and the exiled; you have been told of the
" remedy that lies in your own power; it has been made plain
" and manifest; and also how the public government will
" remain completely on your side without future danger, and
" against which they will be able to make no defence. The

* Here and in Buonaccorso Pitti's chronicle are the only two direct manifestations of the existence of slavery in Florence during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, except as mentioned amongst other property in the Catasto.

" power therefore is undoubtedly in your own hands because " amongst you are those that can do everything *. The last " thing that has been shown you is how Fortune favours the " adventurous and denies boldness to the timid and fearful: " wherefore in everything she prays you, and me along with " you, to settle the mode by which worthy men may have " honourable places in the commonwealth; and how these " hawkers may be dismissed to their peddling, and gain a " living for their families by a total exclusion from public " honours as sowers of scandal and discord in the state. But " if a more efficient remedy can be suggested let it be so; the " sooner the better; and let the most useful be put into imme- " diate execution. By promptness, individual citizens from " distant parts have often performed great deeds in their own " country: let us to work then; let what is uppermost in the " mind be efficiently carried out so that liberty may yet remain " to the commonwealth and its citizens " †.

After this exposition of the state of parties, which made considerable impression on the assembly, all eyes were turned on Niccolò da Uzzàno whose age wisdom and experience stamped him as their Nestor in times of difficulty. Uzzàno proposed the formation of a committee to carry out the project, but foresaw a great impediment in the opposition of Giovanni de' Medici the steady friend of the plebeians, the chief of his own numerous and potent race, the sagacious counsellor of the artisans and even of many rich and powerful merchants who considered him as a father not only of the minor trades, but also as their own stay and champion. With his countenance said Uzzàno their course would be smooth, otherwise doubtful and almost hopeless: Niccolò therefore advised that an attempt should be instantly made to gain over Giovanni, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi undertook this difficult task. He instantly repaired

* The "*Dieci della Guerra*" or ten ministers of war.

† Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. ii.—Machiavelli, Lib. iv°.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1028.

to the Medici's house and declared his mission: Giovanni listened to him for some time with great equanimity and then quietly demanded where he had found out that the tumults of a discontented people would produce peace and tranquillity to the commonwealth? His father Maso never would have desired to remove the people from their just position in the republic except to relieve the more indigent from taxation and similar alleviations, such as his diminution of the salt duty and the emancipation of debtors from the power of creditors while public councils were sitting, in order that they might freely exercise their rights of citizenship; the optional payment of taxation by all those who were rated at only one-third of a florin; and the exclusion of bankrupts from public office as men who were no longer their own masters, who moved and acted at the will of their creditors and were generally full of injustice and cruelty. "Many other public benefits," added Giovanni, "were due to Maso degli Albizzi and yet with such examples, his son wants to destroy the good that such a father had accomplished!" The project was therefore condemned; Rinaldo was warned by the Medici of its evil consequences to himself and others; he was told that as unequal taxation was the cause, so a system of just imposts would be the only cure for discontent; that means must be found to accomplish this; that he himself would endeavour to leave the power of the people as he had found it and advised Rinaldo to follow his example *.

The meeting of Saint Stephen's had not been so secret as to prevent a rumour of what had passed from spreading through Florence, when immediately all the poorer citizens and artisans surrounded Giovanni de' Medici imploring him to take the lead at once and rule the commonwealth: but he steadfastly refused all power, denounced faction, advised quiet and order; and declared his determination to discountenance any citizen that

* Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., cap. v.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1030.—Jacopo Pitti, Dell' Istoria Fiorentina, Lib. i., p. 15.

endeavoured to create disturbances. When the result of his interview with Rinaldo became known the Uzzàno faction resolved if possible to humble him; for although he himself was peaceably inclined, his son Cosimo and still less his nephew Averardo were little disposed to remain passive spectators of public affairs, and both employed themselves most actively in baffling the measures of their antagonists *.

Although the absorbing interest of the Catasto and the military successes in Lombardy calmed down all other agitation for the moment, five years of constant war had tired both weak and powerful, rich and poor, and there was an universal cry for the cessation of taxes. All asserted they could pay no more; the poor with truth; the wealthy not only to destroy the former's hope of having their burdens lightened by increased taxation on themselves but also with the notion of exhibiting a false example of patience under apparent hardship to those who were suffering in reality. The tyranny and insolence of official minions in collecting taxes were excessive, but it was rather their inequality than extreme and general weight that fretted the community; this arose from their arbitrary distribution which now becoming intolerable an universal outcry for more just impositions rang through the commonwealth. The Popolani Grassi opposed this in vain: Giovanni de Medici who from his opulence it was hoped would denounce the measure stood alone amongst them in its favour, and in June 1427 the Catasto appeared amidst the shouts of an exulting people †.

The Catasto was a property tax, measured by the income, at the rate of half per cent. on capital: whoever possessed 100 florins of property *above the cost of living*, paid half a florin, and whoever had 1000 paid five florins; seven florins of A.D. 1427.

* Macchiavelli, Lib. iv.—Nerli Comment., Lib. ii., p. 37.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iii., caps. v. and vi.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1030.—Confesione di Nicolò Tinnuci, MS.

† Dom. Boninsegni, Memorie della Citta di Firenze, Lib. i., p. 28.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. viii.—Bruto., Istor. Fioren., Lib. i., p. 25.

declared income being settled as the representative of a hundred of principal either in goods or money, and fourteen florins of untaxed income were allowed as the estimated cost of maintenance for each individual, but subject to some after modification according to age and circumstances *.

To give a clearer notion of this impost which was followed by the revolt of Volterra and other important consequences, and as far as our slender materials admit to offer a general view of the form and nature of Florentine taxation requires a short but distinct relation that will perhaps facilitate the understanding of subsequent financial measures necessary hereafter to be noticed.

It may be seen by the balance-sheet of Florentine revenues given in the last miscellaneous chapter that in the years 1336 and 1338 they amounted to upwards of 300,000 florins, and the ordinary expenses under 40,000; these revenues were farmed out in 1337 but superintended by six citizens as guardians against oppression: such a surplus more than covered every extraordinary and contingent expense so that until 1336 it rarely happened that any necessity arose either for loans or new impositions †. This revenue was principally drawn from the duty on contracts and that which under the general deno-

* Cavalcanti, Stor. Fior., Lib. iv., cap. viii.—25,500 florins were thus raised in the city of Florence which at half a florin for every hundred of principal would make the aggregate of capital belonging to the citizens equal to 5,100,000 florins or between 5 and 6 millions sterling exclusive of the estimated cost of living at 14 florins a head which on a population *taxed* for the Catasto, of 37,225 citizens would give 521,250 florins of income more, representing (at 7 florins of income for every 100 of capital) 7,446,400 florins additional capital. So that the whole property of the Florentine *citizens* may be estimated at about 12,546,400*l.* sterling. From the first 25,500 florins must however be deducted the amount of a trifling pole tax, levied on all between 18 and 60 years old, which would diminish the 14 florins a head for living income, and hence that basis of calculation; but not a great deal. The above population must I think be taken exclusive of ecclesiastics and untaxed inhabitants, who though subjects were not citizens, but mere *Plebs*.—(Vide *Pagnini, Della Decima*, Sezione ii., cap. vi.)

† Ammirato, Lib. viii., p. 414.—Ben. Varchi, Storia Fior., Lib. ix., p. 260.

mination of *Gabelle;* or tolls and customs paid at the city gates; was a tax upon trade, food, and agriculture. As comforts and luxuries increased they also bore their burden, and much pains were expended in securing a fair imposition and prudent expenditure of public money. But as war, that destroyer of virtue and happiness in national society, became more frequent and costly, more debt accrued, and to pay it, all ordinary revenues were mortgaged: the contest with Mastino della Scala in 1336, required larger supplies than before; and a loan was attempted, intrinsically light but grievously unpopular; for the people as if with an instinctive feeling of future woe, received this unwonted visitor with murmurs of fear and dissatisfaction. The year 1336 may therefore be considered memorable in Florentine history as the epoch of national debt and disaster by the establishment of public funds under the name of "*Monti.*"

The reason for resorting to loans instead of direct taxation was a desire not to increase the Gabelle at the expense of general industry, wherefore the government adopted a deceitful system of borrowing at a certain annual interest, partly from companies of Florentine merchants and partly from individual citizens to whom the ordinary revenues were mortgaged; but these debts were gradually and punctually discharged in due succession. That portion imposed by authority on individuals was named "*Prestanza*" or "*Accatto*" or loan*, and when once established continued from its nature to increase until public credit became exhausted under the augmenting mass. The distribution of these "Prestanze" rather conformed to the nature of a poll-tax than to any clear estimate of income or property; and sometimes the whole transaction was undertaken by a company of merchants with all the public revenue for their security. Thus in the war with Mastino those mer-

* From "*Præstagium*" a barbarous Latin word of the time which according to the Glossaries signified a tribute or forced loan.

chants who took the loan received fifteen per cent. from government, and borrowed on their own responsibility for *eight* with immediate payment; and for *five* with engagements to pay up at more distant periods as the money should be required; while those who without ready money, but having sufficient credit to borrow it, received twenty per cent. per annum*. In general the Prestanza or Accatto was published by proclamation, its amount stated, and the quota of each individual afterwards specified and ordered to be paid at given periods into the public treasury with an assurance of reimbursement from certain revenues as soon as all previous loans should be discharged. In these cases it does not clearly appear whether any interest were paid *before* the principal was liquidated, or whether both principal and interest were paid together and thus became a marketable commodity like our own exchequer bills. To facilitate these loans many expedients were adopted; amongst others a certain quantity of salt proportioned to the individual's taxation was granted at a reduced price with a license to dispose of it in Florence or the contado for its market value as a government monopoly: this was no light favour if received and sold at the state profits, which until Maso degli Albizzi reduced them were above thirteen hundred per cent., that is a prime cost of 12 *soldi* and a selling price of 160, for each *staio* or Florentine bushel†.

The gross amount of a Prestanza was divided amongst the sixteen gonfaions of companies, of which there were four in each quarter of the city, in proportion to the number and riches of the inhabitants, and this was again subdivided by the local authorities amongst individual citizens. From some unfair

* See Antonio Pucci, "*Centiloquio*," Canto xc., p. 169, vol. vi., Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani. This poem is a versification of Giov. Villani's Chronicle and ends in 1373. Pucci is an enthusiastic admirer of his country and Gio. Villani; but in his "*Mercato Vecchio*" and "*Capitolo Morale*" are some interesting sketches of manners.

† Cavalcanti, Stor. Fior., Appendice, vol. ii°, p. 465. The gain on prime cost by this royal monopoly in 1834 was about 1100 per cent.

proceedings in these distributions great complaints arose about a loan of 25,000 florins made in 1382, which on another being exacted in 1390, produced an attempt to remove their cause. For this purpose a committee was formed under each gonfalon to point out where reductions ought in justice to have been made in the former loan, in order to guide the forthcoming distribution. In 1390 therefore each gonfalon sent four deputies, who, forming altogether a board of sixty-four persons, investigated the whole principle of distribution and sent their report to the government: this settled the grand-division amongst the sixteen gonfaloniership. The sub-division was first arranged by seven local boards called the "*Sette Settine*" or seven committees of seven members each, who separately formed seven distinct distribution lists and sent them sealed up to the priors. The Seignory then consigned them to the monks of some specified convent, who after rejecting the two most severe and the two most moderate lists struck an average of the remainder; by which the portion of each individual was determined; and of this distribution distinct registers for every quarter and gonfalon were drawn up with great care by the above named ecclesiastics, and deposited in the treasury for public use.

Taxation is never popular, and even the form of loans with the promise of ultimate restitution worked no real change in its character; for being compulsory they checked trade, in which the money could have been turned to greater advantage. Wherefore to make the Prestanze more palatable as they increased in number, premiums and benefits for punctual payers; pains and penalties for sluggards, defaulters, and those who had only partially acquitted themselves, were awarded. The benefits consisted in being placed as state creditors on the books of the public funds or "*Libri del Monte*" which in 1345 were first kept alphabetically, and promised sure reimbursement of both principal and interest within a specified period, but varying according to the original promptness of payment; and the interest

thus acknowledged ranged from eight to twenty per cent. per annum. Secondly in complete eligibility to every public office and honour; and this was probably the door by which so many low and strange families entered the republic and influenced all its councils, to the great mortification of the Popolani Grassi.

The penalties were of two kinds; one incurred by those who deferred their payments until the last moment and were therefore placed last on the public books; the other, against those that exceeded the legal period without any payment, consisted of a more rigorous taxation and compulsory obedience with a total forfeiture of the loan; the loss of their civic privileges; and an entire exclusion from the benefit of public justice in courts of law besides the nullity of any sentence given in their favour. Those who had paid up a third of their rate, if not more than two golden florins, were exempt from the last penalty but incurred the others; and thus many of the poorer citizens were first ruined by arbitrary taxation, then as defaulters, lost their political privileges, and finally were oppressed or made tools of by the rich, who either paid up their arrears or saved them from ruin at the expense of conscience and liberty. Thus it was that Cosimo de' Medici acquired much of his influence, and actually purchased the Florentine republic *.

A poorer class as we have seen were excused altogether from payment, except at their own option by a law of Maso degli Albizzi, and all defaulters' names were placed in a public register, "*a specchio*," as it was termed; which forfeited their right to office if elected; and this was extended by the Albizzi faction to those who had failed in payment at any time for thirty years previous to 1421. But a peculiar feature in this law was the obligation, by which any purchaser of property became liable for all the public debts of his predecessor due from it, although the latter, as it would appear, might be actually suffering in,

* Della Republica Fiorentina di Donato Giannotti, Lib. i°, cap. v., p. 76.

prison for them at the time. According to the above regulations and under the various names of Prestanze, Prestanzone, Accatto, Balzello, Lotto, Sega, Piacente, Dispiacente, Cinquina, Settina, Nonina, Decina and Ventina, all the loans between 1390 and 1427 were effected. The appellations of Piacente and Dispiacente seem to have been given in bitter mockery by the people; those of number proceeded in all probability from that of the assessors, like the "*Sette Settine*" of 1390, and others called the "*Novine*" of 1406.

Pagnini in his researches on this subject could discover no existing documents which describe with any perspicuity the particular rule and measure that regulated the assignment of each contingent, either to the gonfalon or the individual; so that there is ample grounds for belief, and the fact seems confirmed by Cavalcanti, that it depended on the conscience of those who presided, and therefore in a community so distracted by faction must have been continually and excessively abused. No real justice could have been done by the most impartial assessors without full inquisitorial powers applicable to all sorts of property, and in professional incomes this was in Florence considered so objectionable that combined with other causes all attempts of the government failed for a long time to establish it, until the greater evil of unjust taxation overcame every other consideration; and whether from the opposition of rich and powerful citizens or a prying injustice in its execution, this method was rarely pursued, but on the contrary the old one generally adopted.

It has been already mentioned that the first registration of property for the purpose of taxation was proposed by Count Guido Novello in 1266, and proved the main cause of his expulsion; but the first real introduction of such a measure occurred in 1288, another was ordered by the Duke of Calabria in 1326, when a foreign judge presided in each quarter of Florence with the power of examining seven citizens of the

vicinity on their knowledge of the state of each individual's income and real property. For each of these a certain percentage was charged, and it began well; but the judges soon became corrupt and great injustice followed. A fourth attempt of the same nature was unsuccessfully made in 1351, and subsequently renewed under the name of "*La Sega*:" then followed a hearth tax, which ceasing in 1355 was succeeded by a more serious attempt at registration under severe penalties both in the city and contado; but the rapid change and circulation of property alone baffled all attempts at perfection or stability, and after great expense and trouble it was abandoned, as had been foretold by experienced citizens; probably because the pressure of extreme taxation had not yet reached its height. This seems to have been the prototype of the Catasto of 1427, and is in fact thus named by Domenico Boninsegni where he tells us that there was a discussion in the councils about the great benefit Florence would derive from the "construction of a table or '*Catasto*' or register where all the possessions and moveable property of the city and contado, and of those who resided therein should be described; and it was opposed by many old experienced men as an impossible thing and thus it turned out; for after much writing and expense it was abandoned"*.

Some of the most sagacious and reasonable demands of the Ciompi were that such a register or "*Estimo*" should be made; that no forced loans should be levied for six months, and that all people then taxed at and under four florins should be abated two-thirds, so sharply was taxation felt by the lower class of citizens in those days; but this was only the root of that cancer which spread afterwards so widely for want of some such regulation. This necessity seems always to have been acknowledged in the councils where the plebeian influence was greatest, and an attempt was again made in 1359, with no

* Dom. Boninsegni, Storia Fior., Lib. iii., pp. 438, 449.

better success than before; but as the "*Estimo*" had long been in actual operation throughout the contado it is probable that besides the inquisitorial power and its inevitable train of abuse, the self-interested opposition of the wealthy proved a main obstacle to the introduction of the Catasto in any form until forced on them by public indignation *. Their exemptions from taxation, the surcharges of the poor and middle classes, and all the injustice that in spite of every precaution was sure to attend any system of forced loans unaccompanied by a general estimation of property, such as the Catasto contemplated, were severely felt in Florence: and all these were aggravated by the increasing number of loans occasioned by the war with Philip, which literally forced that important act into a tardy existence †.

If the answer of Giovanni de' Medici to Rinaldo degli Albizzi is genuine he would appear to have been the immediate author as he certainly was the most powerful supporter of the Catasto. "*All the evils of the republic*," said he, "*come from past and present taxes and it is necessary to devise some means for abolishing unjust and unequal taxation:*" but the real author was Filippo di Ghiacceteo, a man of subtle genius and sound notions, who first conceived and proposed it, and at the same time pointed out the many evils of the existing system; amongst them the fact of numerous noble families being reduced to absolute poverty even to the tilling of their own lands for a sustenance; thence arose the hatred of poverty to riches; and the wealthy would redress no wrong lest they themselves should be involved in the general reformation ‡.

Giovanni de' Medici had always honestly paid the full amount of his just taxation, and to him Pagnini attributes the glory of bringing this bold and arduous enterprise to a success-

* Ammirato, Lib. xi., p. 596.

† Varchi, Storia Fior., Lib. xiii.—Pagnini, Della Decima, tomo i°, Sezione Primo, *passim*.

‡ Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1030.—Cavalcanti, Second. Storia, vol. ii., Appendice 40, p. 480.

ful conclusion: what his real motives were we know not; whether from genuine patriotism, or from a long-sighted project for exalting his family by enslaving Florence, as was afterwards accomplished by Cosimo, is a matter of doubt with many: two very different characters are given of him but even the least favourable is full of good qualities. Therefore when enemies can find but little fault; when almost universal respect attended his steps; where a long life seems to have been little troubled by ambition and was unstained by crime; where peace abroad and tranquillity at home were the constant objects of his mind; where continual beneficence marked his steps, and where his last words to his sons were a strong exhortation to shun faction and neither seek eagerly for, or avoid public employments; we may fairly give Giovanni de' Medici credit for honest motives in his political conduct. He was heard to exclaim with a joyous aspect when this great measure had passed the councils, "*When the commonwealth is safe and the power-*" *less content, every honest citizen ought to be satisfied*"*.

The Catasto, which derived its name from the word "*Accatastare*" to heap up or gather together, was a book containing the descriptions of all persons and property subject to taxation in Florence. It was composed of four volumes arranged under the heads of quarters and gonfalons, and divided amongst the four quarters of *San Giovanni*, *Santa Croce*, *Santa Maria Novella*, and *Santo Spirito*. Sixty citizens were chosen by lot, out of which ten were selected as a committee of management. In these books they were instructed to enter the name of every family liable to be taxed, with that of each individual belonging to it; their age, health, capacity, industry, trade profession or employment: to describe their real and moveable property within and without the city, and even in foreign countries;

* Gatteschi, Translatn. of Bruti Stor. Fiorent., Lib. i., p. 22, vol. iº.— Jacopo Pitti, Dell' Istoria Fiorentina, Lib. i., p. 14.—Cavalcanti, Lib. iv., cap. ix.

including their ready money, credits, slaves, cattle, and merchandise; and the value of their business. In like manner other Catasti were formed for the rural population, the various societies of art and learning, the foreigners residing under Florentine jurisdiction, and finally a sweeping one for all other persons not usually subject to taxation. In these registers were noted the profits made by every species of property; that is to say, the quantity of food produced, with its average value; the rents of lands, dwelling-houses, and other buildings; and after a general estimate, seven florins of income were settled as the index or representatives of 100 florins of capital, proportionate sums being placed against the name of every party. From this valuation was deducted all necessary outgoings, such as rents, just debts, the hire of dwelling-houses, shops where an establishment was maintained, the value of horses and mules kept for private use, and 200 florins of capital represented by 14 of income for every mouth they had to feed.

After all these deductions were made, half a florin of tax or the tenth part of five per cent. on every 100 florins of capital, measured as above by the income, was imposed. Upon all the mouths thus deducted who fell between the ages of eighteen and sixty an arbitrary sum or poll-tax of small and limited amount was levied, and varied according to the estimated value of their services, considered as productive capital. After these deductions, if no surplus remained for taxation, the assessors were empowered to fix such a rate as should be agreed upon between them and the tax-payer; wherefore at this point the imposition became unequal if not unjust; because it infringed on necessaries, whereas superfluities alone were touched in all superior stations. To stimulate the people to a fair and honest exposition of their means any concealed property was liable to confiscation; and in all cases of dispute the commissioners had a summary jurisdiction without any form of law.

None of their assessments could be diminished by any appeal unless sanctioned by the great council, until the regular triennial period for renewing the Catasto had arrived, and this notwithstanding any deterioration of the property; but it might be augmented without such authority; and a final decree made it illegal to levy any taxes not imposed according to the above regulations.

The advantages of this Catasto were obvious and at once felt by the suffering people: it arrested all clamour and brought taxation to a nearer degree of equality; but like every other form of impost after a certain point, acted as a direct check on industry and by its frequent recurrence often deprived commercial enterprise of the very funds destined to its fair and honest action. According to Antonio Pucci the Prestanze sometimes came every month *, and in the war with Gian-Galeazzo more than a hundred thousand florins were paid over and above the sum that each citizen was originally taxed with! As much as fifty per cent of each man's revenue had been paid in eleven months, and seventy on the whole year's income †. This, even had it been impartially distributed, was almost intolerable; hence the suffering and lamentations of Florence; hence the accumulated load of public debt; and hence the ultimate breaches of faith, and national bankruptcy. To save itself, the Florentine nation destroyed public credit, and was forced to do so by the consequences of her own extravagance; an extravagance so great that with an ordinary revenue of little more than three hundred thousand florins there were spent in war alone between 1377 and 1406 no less than eleven millions

* "E quasi d'ogni Mese una Prestanza
Abbiamo avuta, e ciascuna riscossa
Abilmente," &c^a. *Centiloquio*, Canto xci.

And well nigh ev'ry month we had a loan
And each man ably paid his own.

† Jacopo Pitti, Storia Fiorentina, Lib. i^o, p. 15.—Dom^o. Boninsegni, Lib. iv., p. 719.

and a half independent of ordinary state expenses and the enormous cost of public buildings and other embellishments, which by some authors are estimated far above the prodigality of war, and nearly all raised by these forced and repeated loans on the citizens *. The Catasto therefore could not be expected to restore national credit nor pay off any portion of the debt, or even insure a punctual discharge of all the interest: it only gave confidence for the future with present satisfaction and relief by a more equal distribution; but commerce always suffered by these continual drains on its aliment; drains which imparted a distant and doubtful value to money that would have realised far greater quicker and more assured profits in trade. This was so well understood that the small merchants and artisans who were not taxed at a higher rate than two florins of surplus income, generally preferred paying the third part and losing it while they employed the remainder in trade than becoming public creditors with a promised interest for the whole.

Loans were first made in Florence to meet particular conjunctures; they were repaid at stipulated periods by appropriated branches of revenue and differed materially from the rapid succession of "*Prestanze*" that followed: they were all extraordinary; but when once this destructive system became ordinary and permanent its character changed into that of a regular but severely impoverishing tax, a diminisher of profits, an unsafe investment, and a caterpillar of industry, uncertain in amount and variable in its periods: for like our own poor's-rate it was frequently repeated even to twelve and sometimes double that number of times in a year †.

The nature of Florentine liberty has been made apparent throughout this work; but of the civic equality which accom-

* Varchi, Storia Fiorentina, Lib. ix., p. 115. Forty-four and a half guineas make 1 lb. Troy, so that 11,500,000 florins are equal to 5,373,375*l.* of our money in actual weight of metal, the revenue being about 140,175*l.* annually or 8,700,000*l.* in the above period.

† Paguini, Della Decima, Sezione ii^a, *passim*.—Cavalcanti, ii^a Storia, cap. xxviii.

panied it, especially as affected by taxation, and of the Catasto's vast importance; a more distinct idea may be formed from the single fact that Niccolò da Uzzàno, the ablest and perhaps one of the honestest of the Albizzi faction, whose share of taxation had never previously exceeded sixteen florins, after the establishment of that system paid no less than 250, or between fifteen and sixteen times the former amount! And this exemption from public burdens was audaciously claimed by the noble Popolani as a compensation for the necessary pomp of those public offices from which they so strenuously endeavoured to exclude the poorer citizens and every other man that did not belong to their party *.

This great financial revolution was followed ere long by the death of its illustrious supporter Giovanni de' Medici, who however has not escaped the charge advanced against his family of fomenting war for private ends. For such reasons, if we are to believe the somewhat doubtful confession of Niccolò Tinucci †, an expedition against Marradi was promoted, and that fortress with Castiglione and all the estates of Lodovico de' Manfredi were, with the exception of Gattaia, unblushingly annexed to the republic; even that town was ceded to the lord of Faenza who claimed it as a family inheritance. Although a mere episode in Florentine history the conquest of Marradi, inasmuch as it was disgraceful to national honesty, merits some notice ‡.

A.D. 1428.

* Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorent^a., Lib. iv., cap. xii.

† As Niccolò Tinucci a former adherent of the Medici, made his "*Confessione o vera Examina*" in September 1433, under the influence of a Scignory enemies to the exiled Cosimo and to procure his own discharge from prison where he had been committed for high treason, it may be reasonably supposed that his evidence was suited to the taste of his examiners and as adverse as possible to those whose secrets he was betraying. He accuses Giovanni of seeking war and even the banishment of Uzzàno while the latter expressly praises him for loving peace and acquits him, as does Cavalcanti, of seeking the downfall of any one. Yet Bruto (Lib. i°, p. 29,) repeats this charge, on Tinucci's assertion, with great confidence and evident satisfaction, although a few pages farther on he seems rather doubtful of this authority (p. 51).

‡ Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorentina, Lib. vii., cap. xxxviii.—Morelli, Ricordi, p. 81.

Shortly before the battle of Zagonara Lodovico de' Manfredi da Faenza son of Giovanni d'Alberghettino, offered his services to the Florentines but not being able to come to an agreement returned to Marradi, a strong mountain fortress in the Val di Lamone of Romagna. The subsequent disaster of Zagonara made Florence more tractable; Lodovico's aid was eagerly sought and with liberal offers; the lordship of Faenza if reduced, being especially promised as a place to which he had some family claims, and with whose reigning chief no terms unsanctioned by him were to be made. Notwithstanding this the defeat of Niccolo Piccinino in the Val di Lamone led, as already mentioned, to a treaty between the lord of Faenza and Florence: indignant at this proceeding in which he had no voice, Lodovico retired to Castiglione and brooding over his grievances hesitated whether to remain steady or join her enemies, but finally and unwisely exhibited his ill-humour by various petty annoyances to Florentine trade which his position enabled him to offer. The Seignory became so alarmed at the prospect of his admitting an enemy into the Mugello that a resolution was passed to secure his person: after vainly tempting him for some time to visit Florence, with the most flattering promises and protestations of amity he, in an evil hour being over-persuaded by an old and confidential follower, repaired to that city and was instantly imprisoned. Such a hostage secured the unwilling obedience of his clan until it suited Cosimo and Averardo de' Medici with their party, who now seemed to govern Giovanni, to incorporate Lodovico's states with the republic. It is asserted by Brutò that Giovanni de' Medici loved war because it enabled him to bind Florence by her pecuniary necessities; he, according to this author, calculated on the Seignory being forced to levy new taxes or borrow from opulent citizens, and either of these courses would favour his views: being the richest citizen Giovanni would be first applied to, and while gaining public applause for

promptness in thus risking his fortune he would be really reducing the country to a dependence on him for its military success and thus acquire the power of prolonging hostilities at his pleasure. If on the contrary new taxes were imposed he could then create a host of dependants by loans that would enable them to pay their share of taxation. Thus either by continual mortgages on the public revenue, which would be a daily augmentation of riches power and reputation; or by private loans to necessitous individuals of rank and influence who would become his humble servants; he was sure to gain. He had besides a number of enemies without the means of paying up their share of taxation; and as this incapacitated them for public office he would thus possess the power of putting them "*a Specchio*" which necessarily brought them amongst the "*Stracciati*," and being in this way excluded from public honours they remained powerless *. The "*Specchio*" or mirror, was an invention of Benedetto degli Alberti for compelling great citizens to pay their taxes; as in his time their power and insolence were at such a height that they either effectually avoided or flatly refused to pay. Public discontent rose in proportion to the wrong, which became an established custom until Alberti in declaring that all the great citizens paid when they pleased but that the greater the citizen the more ought to be required of him, proposed a law for the formation of a *Specchio* or book in which were recorded quarter by quarter, and gonfalon by gonfalon, the names of all those citizens who from not having paid up their taxes, or from any other cause, were considered as public debtors; and no one who was "*a Specchio*" or recorded as a debtor in that book could accept or exercise any public office; but on a citizen's name being drawn for official situations, if found in the above record it was instantly "*Stracciato*" or torn up, and the office forfeited; and this law good in

* Bruto, Storia Fiorentina, Lib. i., p. 29.

theory was also effectual in practice until made an instrument of faction *.

All these charges were repeated with more truth against Cosimo; but a war on Marradi, whether by Medician influence or not, was decreed in the public councils; Bernardino della Carda being named captain and Averardo de' Medici commissary: Marradi, and soon after Castiglione, with the rest of Lodovico's estates capitulated in the autumn of 1428, but under certain conditions, the principle of which was this chieftain's restoration to liberty. As generalissimo Bernardino had authority to make any capitulation he pleased; but he nevertheless strengthened himself with Averardo's approbation and Lodovico's territory became a Florentine province. Although willing to receive the spoil, the governing party was opposed to the above condition and shamefully refused to set the prisoner free, wherefore Bernardino although domiciled in the country indignantly quitted their service †.

The principal official adherent of the Medici was Martino Martini notary or chancellor of the reformations; but the mass of Giovanni's strength lay in the middle and poorer classes of citizens: these had neither forgotten the times of the Ciompi nor their own grievances; for the former were comparatively recent and the latter still unremoved. Incessant discord had given no breathing-time for society to resume its tone, the people looked for a vindicator, and provided that he only curbed the insolence of their enemies were ready to sacrifice even their long dream of freedom to present revenge: they now perceived that Liberty was only the rallying cry of personal ambition and themselves the mere instruments of its accomplishment; and this at the very moment that they were

* Varchi, Stor. Fiorentina, Lib. viii., p. 278.—Cavalcanti, vol. ii°, Appen. 99, p. 512.

† Confessione o Vera Examina di Ser Niccolò Tinucci, Notaio dei X., MS. —Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1045.—Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. iii., cap. viii. and xviii.; Lib. vii., cap. xxxviii.—Neri Capponi, Commentari Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1165.

flattered pitied and deluded by the craft of designing politicians. In such a state the despotism of one who would punish their oppressors became preferable to continual suffering, and Giovanni de' Medici who had every necessary quality for such a conjuncture was welcomed as the people's champion.

The custom of filling the election purses by secret scrutiny with the names of those citizens who for a given number of years were eligible to public office has been frequently mentioned: every Seignory lasted two months, and any man who once sat in it became ineligible until the next scrutiny took place. In order to keep unknown the names of those citizens which still remained in the purse after each succeeding election, and thus prevent the previous bribery of the members of government, the officers and assistants at these periodical ceremonies were forbidden by law and by a sacramental oath, to divulge the names of the elected. For these once known, and those of the bimensal Seignory, being successively withdrawn from the original number, the chances could be calculated (particularly towards the termination of the period of scrutiny) of who were likely to be drawn: and as the residue diminished, the facility of bribing increased, so that when any revolution was contemplated it only became necessary to wait for a favourable Seignory to insure its accomplishment. This like many other regulations was theoretically good but easily circumvented by the same ingenuity that contrived it and entirely rested on individual honesty, which however will act conscientiously without the vain formality of all those oaths and legal prohibitions that may uphold rights but not teach duties.

Martino Martini therefore, according to the questionable confession of Tinucci and the decided assertions of Bruto, being under great obligations to Giovanni, revealed to him the names of those who were in the election purses and indicated all that

he conceived would be most likely to govern under Medician influence. The scrutinies of 1421 and 1426 were in this way disclosed to Giovanni and of course enabled him to frame all his political and personal conduct with that profound dissimulation which Bruto attributes to him, and which was absolutely necessary to work out his designs. Hence therefore his apparent disregard of office, which he knew would be pressed upon him; his absence from the palace, where he was sure to be called; his courtesy, liberality, and general forbearance: he was powerful, and naturally benevolent; and could afford to be liberal because it increased his strength: but nearly all this might have also proceeded from innate integrity of character combined with the spirit of the time and the political customs of his country; or it might be, as Bruto endeavours to prove, a deep-laid scheme of usurpation: the same symptoms often attend the most opposite maladies *.

However this may be, Giovanni and Cosimo de' Medici moved onward with increasing power until 1428 when the health of the former began to decline, and according to Bruto and Tinucci, his death was accelerated if not caused, by a strong apprehension of what might personally happen to him by the sudden dismissal of Martino from office and his own exclusion from the public palace which had just been decreed †. If he had ever been base enough to use Martino's treachery as the instrument of his own exaltation, the sudden fall of this man gave sufficient cause for fear because the torture, which usually followed suspicion, would have elicited any tale the torturers required: but the testimony of Giovanni's great antagonist Niccolo da Uzzàno one of the best and ablest of the Albizzi faction is far less questionable than the prejudice of a Venetian writer, or the interested evidence of a discarded friend

* Bruto, Istor. Fiorentina, Lib. i°, p. 25.
† Gio. Cambi, p. 133.—Bruto, Istorie Fiorentine, Lib. i., p. 31. — Tinucci, Confessione. — Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1047.

and state prisoner, whose principal object was his own deliverance from torture and incarceration*.

Feeling the approach of death Giovanni assembled his friends and kindred and thus addressed Cosimo and Lorenzo. "My beloved sons, neither I nor any other person that enters
A.D. 1429. "this world should grieve at the exchange of mun-
"dane anxieties for eternal repose. I feel that my
"last hour draws nigh, and from what might alarm timid
"women and cowardly men, I draw comfort; because it comes
"in the course of nature and not from my own imprudence.
"To this I owe my length of years, and I have more than
"my share of fortune when I consider how joyfully, in the
"triumph of peace and victory, my last movement is made
"from mortal to immortal life. I leave you with the ample
"riches which God and my own exertions have given me
"and which your excellent mother has so much assisted to
"acquire and preserve. I leave you with the fairest prospects
"that ever Tuscan merchants had; with the favour and
"benevolence of every worthy citizen and the affection of a
"people which has ever chosen our family as their polar star;
"and if you forsake not the customs of our progenitors the
"people will always favour you and confer their dignities
"upon you. In order to secure this be compassionate to the
"poor and assist them with your alms; to the rich be gracious
"and obliging, especially if in honest adversity. Never give
"your counsel against the people's will, unless they are bent
"on ignoble or impolitic actions. I advise and I pray you not
"to frequent the public palace so as to make it appear like
"your shop, but rather wait until called upon by the palace
"itself, and then be zealous and obedient to the Seignory: let
"your counsel be friendly, not dictatorial; and be not rendered
"proud and arrogant by public honours or popular applause.
"Exert yourselves to keep the people at peace and the markets

* Confessione, &c., di Niccolo Tinucci.

"abundant: avoid being seen in the law courts lest your pre-
"sence should endanger justice; for whoever proves an obstacle
"to justice, by justice will ultimately perish. I leave you free
"from any moral stain because by me none has ever been
"acquired; I leave you the heirs of glory, not of infamy.
"I leave you with cheerfulness; but I should be still more
"happy if I did not see you mixed up with sects and factions.
"To your care I commend Nannina my wife and your mother;
"see that my death diminish not her accustomed honours and
"respect; and when I am no more do you my children pray
"to God that he may be the salvation of my soul: and now
"take my paternal blessing; and thou Cosimo be kind to
"Lorenzo; and thou Lorenzo be obedient to Cosimo as if he
"were thy father." Having concluded this discourse after a few hours he died *.

Giovanni must be considered as the founder of Medician greatness: before his time, although an illustrious influential family and occasionally distinguished in national politics, they were, with the exception of Salvestro and Vieri, historically unimportant. After Giovanni their star shone with fitful but enduring brightness; veiled in clouds or obscured by storms its light still streamed through the murky atmosphere of national politics until it finally settled into a steady but fallacious ray which rather dazzled than enlightened the world. Giovanni was a long-sighted and sagacious man who knew his fellow-citizens and the way to lead them; who saw their errors and had the prudence to avoid them by steering a steady but

* This report of Giovanni's last words taken from an old MS. in the author's possession agrees nearly word for word with that given by Cavalcanti and nearly so with Ammirato's account: Macchiavelli's though abridged is substantially the same; and as Ammirato says that he had seen it in MSS. older than Macchiavelli's birth, it is evidently no fanciful oration. (*Vide MS. Memorie di Giovanni di Averardo detto Bicci de' Medici, alla morte sua nell*, 1428 (1429).—*Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorentina*, Lib. v., cap. iii., *MS. and since printed.*—*Ammirato*, Lib. xix., p. 1047.—*Macchiavelli, Storia Fiorentina*, Lib. iv°., also *Toscana Illustrata.*

unusual course. He made his own fortune, knew the force of gold, and whether artfully or undesignedly, worked it through all the intricacies of Florentine character into a mighty and extended web which ultimately enveloped the liberties of Florence. His nature was benevolent; and he soon perceived that popularity would do more than pride, generosity than avarice; beneficence than rapacity: and as he naturally leaned, even by the admission of his enemies, towards these virtues, inclination and interest spontaneously united for his advancement; other men's misfortunes served but as a foil for his own virtues and as such he may have used them. Apparently unsolicitous and even unambitious of honours he yet enjoyed their substance, and sagaciously based the greatness of his family on public affection. His ambition was perhaps less personal than prospective; less for himself than his posterity, for he well knew the talents of Cosimo; and while he steadily upheld the people's rights and opposed the rich Popolani he appears to have escaped the general hatred of the latter. His own interests were apparently so identified with the public good that his measures were generally popular, and he thus laid deep foundations for that edifice of family greatness which Cosimo was destined to erect and Lorenzo to finish. What Giovanni's secret motives were; whether for himself or his descendants; or whether they resulted from innate moral rectitude we know not, for few have been so differently represented; but they wore the garb of virtue; and the following character from his great and able opponent Niccolo da Uzzàno, a man whom say Bruto and Tinucci he attempted by every means to ruin and drive into exile, may not be lightly treated; nor should the motives and actions of his successors be suffered to cast retrospective opprobrium on his name*.

"This illustrious man," said Uzzàno with tears in his eyes, as we are told by Cavalcanti a cotemporary historian "this

* Tinucci, Confessione, &c.—Bruto, Storia Fior., Libro i°, p. 25.

" illustrious man loved the good and pitied the bad, for he " held that the latter were unfortunate, the former, virtuous " only by divine grace and their own exertions. This man " never complained of other citizens, and no one had any com- " plaint against him. He was ever compassionate to the poor " and was the succour of the rich; a striver against the ad- " versity and a friend to the prosperity of men wherever shame " did not thereby attach itself to the unfortunate person or the " republic. His hands were always clear of bribes, and he " chose rather to make others great than to be made so himself " by any man. He never asked for preëminence in the state, " but strenuously exerted himself for the exaltation of others. " The less he demanded the more he received: he never went " to the palace except when summoned: he ever deprecated " war and favoured peace, to the best of his ability. Never " did he ask any reward for the benefits that he had conferred " on the community, and they were great and many; wherefore " let none of you his kinsfolk weep, or lament his loss; because " a man so just leaves you rich in glory, and you are made " more illustrious by the death than by the life of so good a " person; it is after death that works are made manifest. But " thou, O city weep! thou hast cause to weep, and to clothe " thyself in sorrow and vexation; for even as thy walls encircle " thy people, so did the virtues of this man adorn thy citizens. " This city, deprived of his light remains in darkness; but " those remedies that the Almighty God and good men have " conceded to us, to them we must have recourse and implore " the most high and immortal Creator that as he vouchsafed " the grace of giving us so just a man, he may now please to " crown him with divine and everlasting glory"*.

Such is the praise of a political enemy addressed to the two sons of the deceased at a time when death exile and ruin were generally the consequences of political defeat; and if insincere,

* Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorentina, Lib. v., cap. iv.

which Uzzàno's character forbids, it was a mockery too cruel and insulting to be addressed with impunity in the first moments of affliction, even by that powerful chief, to such a man as Cosimo de' Medici.

Giovanni was tall and well knit, with a long face and dark complexion but not much colour. He had more humour than was promised by a melancholy countenance, and was gracious when in office; not eloquent, because unendowed by nature with lingual fluency, but a clear arguer and sagacious counsellor on public measures. He received general praise, and, says Cavalcanti, if his rival lauded him so eloquently what must have been the eulogiums of his friends! Yet it must not be supposed that the rest of Uzzàno's faction had their leader's magnanimity; as an individual he was generally regretted, but he had been an impediment and a formidable rival, sins not easily forgiven, and his memory suffered accordingly. Giovanni is praised by his friends for never having sought the downfall of any man but only his own legitimate exaltation, and that by simple gentleness of conduct which according to its real motive might be either pure Christian virtue or a deep and artful policy*.

The latter part of 1428 and the commencement of the present year were also distinguished by some liberal commercial advantages granted to Siena, less from any good-will or broad views of trade than with the object of securing her friendship through fear of Visconte, and perhaps with some relation to their own design of punishing Lucca for her treacherous conduct in the late war. These were followed by a modification of the duties on the produce of Romanìa and the rest of Greece, in order to attract the commerce of those countries to Pisa, which however did not flourish under Florentine dominion. A law against buying and selling by any but Florentine weights and measures also distinguishes this period as well as the creation

* Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. v., cap. v.

of an office called "*The Conservators of the Laws*" composed of ten citizens and rendered necessary by the neglect, oppressions, and general maladministration of public offices. Like most Florentine reforms it worked well for some years by creating a strong and wholesome fear of its authority; but a good spirit is more easily invoked than permanently maintained, and reforms only last until human ingenuity has had time to circumvent them: this was remarkably the case in Florence, and is perhaps what impressed Macchiavelli so strongly with the necessity of periodically reducing institutions to first principles*.

Some severe enactments were also about this period renewed which excluded illegitimate children from all public honours and offices, laws essentially unjust without the advantage of efficiency; but a milder spirit shone forth perhaps from the ascending influence of the Medici, in the restoration of the long-persecuted Alberti to their native city; and an attempt to recover that city and contado from the injuries of war by allowing all foreigners who settled there to hold real property, shows that the country suffered in its population more severely than appears on the surface of historical records; but this law ceased in 1454†.

The Catasto was too searching a medicine for opulent citizens to swallow in peace, and Giovanni's death became a signal for fresh discussions; but even before this they had used every art to make it hateful and while enforced with unusual severity at home they insisted that the whole territory beyond the contado should be made subject to its action; this was ostensibly to reach a mass of property said to be held by Florentine citizens under other names, but really, as was believed, to make the measure still more unpopular: nor is this unlikely, for Niccolo da Uzzàno, no friend of the Catasto, directly supported the proposal, while Giovanni and Cosimo de' Medici were

* Boninsegni, Istor. Memorie della Città di Firenze, Lib. i°, p. 31.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1046.

† Confessione, &c^a, di Tinucci, MS.—S. Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1046.

strong in opposition. The poorer classes of Volterra were generally favourable to this system, but the richer citizens asserted their national equality with Florence; declared themselves allies under her protection, not subjects; and stoutly refused to suffer any breach of the international convention which guaranteed an independent self-government. The question; probably through the influence of Giovanni de' Medici; was at first decided in their favour, but ultimately against them; and after much discussion eighteen of the principal citizens who had been sent to plead the cause of Volterra were imprisoned for refusing to abide by the decree: their incarceration lasted six months until wearied out with suffering they by the advice of Cosimo de' Medici, yielded to the obnoxious demand*.

The deputies' return did not calm Volterra but on the contrary increased the agitation; they were at once accused of sacrificing their country's cause to personal inconvenience and the people called loudly on Giovanni Contugi, a citizen of some note to head an insurrection. Contugi prudently declined, yet proposed Giusto Landini, a young and popular citizen of humble origin but unquiet and aspiring character, in his place: he had little difficulty with Giusto who having been one of the imprisoned deputies burned to revenge his individual wrong and was nobly alive to all the glory of emancipating and ruling his native country. The revolt soon became general; Giusto assumed the government; the Anziani acquiesced for the moment; and the cry of liberty and independence was echoed from the ancient battlements of Volterra: this news flew rapidly to Florence; a commission of ten was immediately nominated to quell the revolt; but the country was at peace, and the people were not alarmed.

* Neri Capponi, Commentarj Rer. Ital. Script. tom. xviii., p. 1166.—Gio. Morelli, Ricordi, p. 82.—Ammirato, Lib. xix., pp. 1048, 1049.—Pignotti, Stor. della Toscana, Lib. iv., cap. ix.—Cavalcanti, Lib. v., cap. vi.—Cambi, Ist. Fior., p. 177.

Amongst the ten of war were Niccolo da Uzzano, Rinaldo degli Albizzi, Palla Strozzi, and Puccio Pucci the friend and able adviser of Cosimo: Palla Strozzi and Rinaldo were made commissaries; and Nicolas Fortebraccio called Niccolo della Stella who then happened to be at Fucecchio with his followers, was appointed general of the Florentines. They soon laid siege to Volterra and had Pomerancia and all other dependencies in their favour, but a general amnesty was offered on condition of surrender; Giusto confident in the strength of his position and the public union resolved on defence but demanded assistance from Lucca and Siena; the latter refused as an ally of Florence; and Paulo Guinigi of Lucca still dreading her resentment for his treachery in the Milanese war, not only followed this example but made a merit of revealing to Florence what she was already acquainted with*.

Clamours against the Catasto and its unjust extension to Volterra were loudly and industriously echoed by its more opulent enemies at Florence in order to increase their own ranks and destroy this salutary act; but the poorer people of Volterra who saw its justice and required its protection, declared their good-will. They were informed that Florence did not wish to tax their property but only that of Florentine citizens fraudulently concealed under Volterranian names; that native rights would not be disturbed, and that truth alone was sought for, without which justice became impossible†. Meanwhile the aspect of affairs began to alter in Volterra: Ercolano, the brother or kinsman of Contugi, seeing no prospect of success determined to propitiate Florence by the murder of Giusto and the consequent termination of hostilities; wherefore on the seventh of November 1429 at the head of a band of citizens he sought an interview with this chief who being a man of frank and fearless character and heedless of danger, especially from Con-

* Orl°. Malavolti, Stor. di Siena, Parte iii^a, Lib. ii°.—S. Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xix., p. 1031.

† Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorent., Lib. v., cap. viii.

tugi's brother, was walking half-armed in the apartments of the palace: Ercolano led him in earnest conversation amongst the conspirators by whom he was almost instantly despatched, but not before several had fallen under his determined hand. The corpse wrapped in a mantle was cast from the palace windows and his followers taken by surprise and terror-struck gradually disappeared; Volterra was offered conditionally to the Florentine commissaries and everything fell back, not to its former state of freedom, but with an additional fortress, the inevitable Catasto, a diminished territory, and lost independence *.

At Giovanni's death Cosimo became at once the leading citizen of Florence: Uzzano was verging towards the grave; Rinaldo degli Albizzi with great talents and all the influence of his father's name was intellectually inferior to Cosimo; prouder; perhaps more honest; but infinitely less opulent; Neri Capponi deservedly enjoyed a great reputation and had strong personal influence both from his own and his father's virtues but was comparatively poor; his power therefore was less and had it been more he might have been too honest to use it with the unscrupulousness of Cosimo. The latter was invariably supported by his cousin Averardo and Puccio Pucci a citizen of low rank; both men of talent, but the last preëminent, and the first compensating in boldness and energy for what he lacked of superior genius. Without the advice of these two, says Bruto, "Cosimo never moved a leaf." At his accession to power Cosimo found the city distracted by political factions and had himself been no idle spectator: he at once aspired to lead the people and govern the commonwealth against all the opposition of the great and he possessed the requisite qualities; youth, sense, genius, a powerful eloquence, becoming gravity, constancy of purpose, gentle manners, endless riches, liberality, splendour, and a solid magnificence in his

* Gio. Morelli, Ricordi, p. 82.—Cavalcanti, Lib. v., cap. xiv.—Macchiavelli, Lib. iv.—Gio. Cambi, Istorie, p. 178.—Neri Capponi, Commentarj, Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1166.

establishment; all these caught the favour of the multitude, and the more so because he was considered as their own. His ambition too was veiled under an unassuming courtesy of demeanour which in so distinguished a person won every heart but did not blind the eyes of his enemies, for his power over the lower classes whenever it suited him to agitate shook the magisterial authority to its centre. Thus the union of princely riches and more than princely talent; the memory of paternal fame; his frank and social bearing which put no distance between him and his fellow-citizens; his extensive charities and general beneficence as well as the peculiar times in which he lived, when the whole nation was ready to be bought; all conspired to lay the foundation of that great power which undermined republican liberty and in his children's hands completed the subjugation of their country. Yet says Bruto; and his favourable testimony to a Medici is important; "All the authors of those times agree that no man in any city into whose hands public liberty ever fell was able by arms and violence to acquire that authority to which Cosimo in a free city and in a cause hateful to all (which greatly increased his difficulty) achieved by public favour and esteem"*. Nor was it easy even for those who had succeeded in penetrating his intentions and discovering his real objects to rebuke or repress them: they were checked by a certain air of blended gravity and moderation that never outstepped the bounds of civic equality and either deceived or disarmed the greater part of his countrymen.

No sooner was Niccolo Fortebraccio again left free by the submission of Volterra than he retired to his old quarters about Fucecchio and recruiting his army with half the ruffians of Tuscany whom he allured to his standard, prepared in the month of November to ravage Lucca. To this he was probably encouraged by the known anger of Florence against that state

* Bruto, delle Istorie Fiorentine, Lib. i°, p. 33.

and the prospect of being adopted as her general; but his ostensible reason; for even these lawless miscreants alleged reasons for their deeds; was to recover some arrears of money due since 1418 to his uncle Braccio da Montone of whom he was the heir*. Paulo Guinigi from whom this money had been similarly extorted by Braccio, despatched Jacopo Viviani, (a man whose life he had formerly spared for a conspiracy to murder him) with complaints against Fortebraccio's conduct: the ambassador delivered his remonstrance in public, but privately excited all Florence to hostility. To shield himself from Paulo's resentment he procured from the Seignory an order to prohibit his return; and thus did he betray a master who had mercifully spared his life when he might have legally and conscientiously taken it, so sure is it that a man rarely forgives the person whom he has deeply injured.

The eager and exciting representations of Viviani backed by encouraging accounts from Fortebraccio of his own rapid progress and the disposition of the people; and still further corroborated by the various Florentine agents in the Lucchese state, inflamed the public mind so as to engender an universal desire of making the war its own. Resentment of former injuries and the ambition of conquering a weaker state that bordered their whole frontier and was considered both morally and geographically as the portal of their enemies, excited such a spirit in Florence that nothing could stand against it †. It was said that Neri Capponi encouraged Fortebraccio secretly to the enterprise; but as Macchiavelli, Nerli, Poggio, Malavolte, and Ammirato principally inculpate Rinaldo degli Albizzi, the two latter giving his speech; while Bruto evidently following Tinucci's Confession, entirely exonerates him, and even asserts that he was an active advocate for peace, it is difficult now to name all who urged on this war, and still more so to discover

* Neri Capponi, Comment. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xix., p. 1166.—Pogg'o Bracciolini, Storia, Lib. vi., p. 171.

† Neri Capponi, Comment., Rer. Ital. Scrip., tomo xviii., p. 1167.

what party incited Fortebraccio to commence it; for Neri Capponi tells us that some person did do so, and his manner of relating it leads to the belief that it might have been himself. It is improbable that this general would have ventured on so bold a step unless well assured of Florentine approbation if not support, and because various personal and party views induced the leading factions to plunge Florence into hostilities, it may be believed that all except Uzzàno and a very small minority, as will be seen by the votes, joined in this warlike agitation *. Nevertheless as these intrigues, if they existed, were secretly conducted unknown and unsanctioned by the state, the Seignory asserted in answer to Paulo that Fortebraccio was no longer in their pay and therefore acting without their orders on his own responsibility: yet says Giov. Morelli, a cotemporary, "all was done in order to bring the people under the yoke" †.

Cosimo and his faction were not indifferent spectators of these things and their intrigues if we credit Tinucci may be thus shortly narrated. Cosimo and Averardo de' Medici being determined to ruin Uzzàno whom Niccolo Soderini one of their own faction had unknown to them designed to assassinate; after promising him protection when discovered, took the opportunity of another partisan, Nastagio Guiducci's election to the priorship and made him promise to arrest and accomplish the ruin of Uzzàno, for which he received a present bribe and the promise of what more might be wanted. This, had Nastagi been able to accomplish it, would have at once cleared the way for Cosimo; but the scheme failed and he resorted to war as a secure road to political supremacy because the "*Specchio*" and his ample resources enabled him either to win over or neutralise the opposition of a majority in the public councils but more especially in the Seignory. The Medici

* Documenti, Cavalcanti, vol. ii.— Neri Capponi, Commentarj Rerum. Ital. Script., tom. xviii., p. 1166.— Orl°. Malavolti, Storia di Siena, Parte iii^a, Lib. ii°, p. 19.—Nerli, Com. Lib. ii°. —Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 172.

† Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1053.—Ricordi di Giovan. Morelli, p. 87.

therefore rejoiced when Niccolo Tinucci first told them of Fortebraccio's aggression, and immediately tried to secure the co-operation of Tommaso Barbadori the gonfalonier of justice in their prosecution of a war against Lucca. Barbadori was unwilling to act openly as chief instigator; wherefore Nastagi Guiducci and Tommaso Franceschi were by means of Niccolo Soderini and Puccio Pucci established as the movers of this question *.

Fortebraccio's rapid progress excited the Florentines with the prospect of new conquests although still faint from the late war's exhaustion and the recent expeditions against Marradi and Volterra; wherefore a united assembly of the three councils was by the exertion of Nastagi summoned to discuss the subject. The first meeting was early in November, at which a hoary citizen named Lorenzo Rosso seems to have had much influence in promoting war while many influential members were bribed by the war party to stay away: the second was summoned for the fourth or ninth of December; but the day previous, Nastagi, Soderini, and Ser Martino Mastini had a secret consultation with the Medici. Averardo advised an energetic adherence to their actual plan, and Cosimo offered all his aid to carry it out: the three former endeavoured to bring Rinaldo degli Albizzi into their opinion, but he was adverse to their mode of acting though not to the enterprise, and being told that the Medici advised it said he objected because he thought it should at first be more carefully pondered; but adding, "Do what you think good, for you of the Seignory should not be opposed; yet I do not approve of it." The Councils of the People, the Community, and the Two Hundred; in all four hundred and ninety-eight members; assembled the next morning, and after much discussion war was formally voted with only ninety-nine dissentients, and even these when they rose to speak were insulted, spat at, and their words

* Tinucci, Confessione.—S. Ammirato, Stor., Lib. xix., p. 1053.

rendered inaudible by long-continued knocking and coughing*. Ashamed of this disorder the Seignory imposed silence, and Agnolo Pandolfini a citizen of exalted character and influence, rising; first demolished the warlike arguments of Rinaldo degli Albizzi, then demonstrated the impolicy of war, and if made, asserted that domestic factions would render it ruinous to Florence, because every individual was resolved to adhere obstinately to his own opinion. "It is enough for me" said Pandolfini "that I have striven to preserve the honour and prosperity of my native city: I know that all is useless, yet the authors of this enterprise will be the first to repent of it." Nor was there one who had the boldness to speak so warmly against the war as Agnolo Pandolfini did for the public good, which he put before all other considerations †.

It was marvellous, says Ammirato, to see those who had hitherto opposed war, now ardently promoting it, and on the contrary it was loudly blamed by those who before had been its warmest supporters! which perhaps, adds the historian, "arises from the greater desire that men have to seize the property of others than to take care of their own; because the hope of gain is always greater than the fear of loss." But the more equal distribution of taxation caused by the Catasto, rendered this burden generally lighter and the great mass of citizens more willing to bear it for so alluring an object as the conquest of Lucca: and moreover the Medician or war faction, was the most powerful and energetic, and the multitude of both factions who shouted along with them enormous. In this conjuncture Niccolò da Uzzàno rose and spoke strongly against it as impolitic, unwarrantable, and difficult to accomplish. It was unwarrantable because the only shadow of an excuse for

* "Anchiennes Croniques de Pise en Ytalie," from MS. No. p. 377, Royal Lib., Paris.—Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. viii.—Neri Capponi, Commento. di Cose seguite in Italia del 1419 al 1456, Rer. Ital. Scriptores, vol. xviii., p. 1162, &c. Giov. Morelli, Ricordi, p. 87.—Giov. Cambi, p. 179.

† Vide note 2, Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vi., cap. vii., p. 306.

hostilities was the treachery of Paulo in the Milanese war, an act not unprovoked, and which had been completely cancelled by admitting him into the late treaty with that state as a friend and adherent of Florence; but, said his enemies, expressly to deprive him of Philip's protection and give Florence the opportunity of revenge without offending the Duke of Milan*. It was difficult said Uzzàno, because our enemies will instantly support Lucca, and above all Duke Philip will and can easily assist that state without any hostile demonstration. Venice he said was very little to be trusted, Siena doubtful, and on seeing Pisa conquered and Lucca about to fall would provide for her own safety. He finally urged the Florentines to be satisfied with their actual dominion and give up conquest; but was answered that if this reasoning were always good Florence would then have been only a petty community comprised within her original boundaries instead of a powerful republic†. War and the siege of Lucca having been determined, apparently with the intervention and consent of subordinate cities, and a Balià of Ten nominated, two commissaries repaired to the army and found Niccolo Fortebraccio before Villa Basilica where he was instantly proclaimed General of the Florentines. The town soon surrendered, the captured places were delivered up to Florence and the army soon after marched to Collodi.

Thenceforward the war began to languish; not from any want of force talent or military skill, or any peculiar virtue of the enemy; but entirely from the interested selfish ambition of individuals and the clash of opposing factions. Those of Uzzàno and the Medici were now at their full height; and the former, because it was entirely opposed to hostilities wished for their failure even to the dishonour of Florence, rather than

* Neri Capponi, Commentarj Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1166-7.—This seems doubtful: the Florentine ambassadors were strong against it and held out to the last.—(*Vide Documenti*, vol. ii., *Storia di Cavalcanti.*)

† Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1055.—Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vi., cap. vi.

success with the glory of their political antagonists and against their own recorded opinions.

The Medici on the other hand seeing many of their rivals employed in directing the war, became jealous of such exaltation and therefore exaggerated their failures and disparaged their success; yet both chiefs were able and prudent men, both competent to conduct the state; the one waxing, the other waning; but each struggling to acquire or preserve the ascendant, and perhaps both turned somewhat from their natural course by the intemperance of their followers*. The result was a fierce encounter of factions; the object, exaltation of party; the victim public good: national energy was distorted to party purposes, national rulers were paralysed even when honest, for they were forced to employ the partisan, not the individual. The country suffered, the war was cruel beyond the age, procrastinated, and proportionably feeble; an imp of faction fostered by treachery and hate.

Amongst the "Ten of War," who were elected on 15th December, we find Giovanni Pucci, Martino Martini, Giovanni della Stufa, and Neri Capponi; a majority of them being either direct partisans or under the influence of Cosimo. His brother Lorenzo was immediately appointed ambassador to Milan and Venice where he had opportunities of protracting the war at the pleasure of Cosimo by a secret understanding with both governments. But ere all this happened Fortebraccio had made terrible progress: his soldiers swarmed over the whole country like pismires hurrying to and fro and loaded with prey: throughout all the valleys of Lucca, says Cavalcanti, nothing was heard but the tocsin's sound, the shouts of men the screams of women and the cries of children; even the very beasts of the field added to the fearful scene by their lowing and bellowing: the whole country was driven to ruin;

* Anchiennes Croniques de Pise en Ytalie.—Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vii., cap. viii., p. 387.

"for in this perverse man" says the same author, "not only was there no pity but he gave not the slightest pause or respite to his cruelty." Town after town fell beneath him and was crushed: Pontetetto first yielded; then San Quirico, Lucchio, Castellare, Monte Fegatese, Ghivizzano, Casole, Rocca dal Borgo, Lugliano, Cotrone, and several others, were all successively taken and ravaged even before the Florentine standard was unfurled in the vales of Lucca*.

Rinaldo degli Albizzi was made commissary, and his successes would quickly have brought the war to a crisis had he not on that very account been removed through Medician influence: this removal was some time after followed by defeat, and Averardo apprehensive of its influence on the public mind hurried from the Mugello to the capital, and amidst a round of private entertainments given for this sole object, succeeded in persuading the citizens that if a new Balià were appointed Lucca would soon be conquered: the suggestion was taken; a fresh Balià named; and Cosimo and Puccio Pucci were of the number†. This gave the Medici complete command of the war; new measures were adopted; Niccolo Tolentino and Michellotto were engaged with their respective followers; the military expenses of course increased and so heavy and continued a drain of taxation was established that but few unassisted by Cosimo, could pay up in time, wherefore numbers were placed "*Allo Specchio*" according to the wishes of the Medici. Averardo kept constantly with Michellotto secretly directing his movements, and after an abortive attempt to condemn Giovanni Guicciardini for supposed peculation while with the army, because he obstructed their projects and was likely to expose them, the Medici created an "*Office of Rebellion*" to intimidate and persecute their opponents under legal forms which searched out those who had been sentenced but had

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. iv.
† Ammirato, Lib. xxix., p. 1070.—Tinucci, Confessione.

escaped punishment, in order to carry all the rigour of the law into action against them; and because Tinucci, as he asserts, refused to be instrumental in injuring a certain Piero del Caro and was moreover the means of his learning their adverse intentions, he was never more trusted by the Medici*. Cosimo, Averardo, Puccio Pucci, Piero Ginori, Lorenzo Verezzano, Niccolo Bussini, Giovanni de' Pucci and Tinucci usually met at the houses of these two Medici to settle the proceedings of the "Ten of War" and other magistracies, Averardo being always described as chief actor in all these intrigues. Nor were they idle abroad; for while Lorenzo de' Medici was at Milan he kept up a close intercourse and friendship with the Duke and had frequent nightly interviews with him and his secretary, the account of which he used to write with his own hand in cypher to Cosimo; so that his private secretary who was Tinucci's informant remained entirely ignorant of what had passed†.

Astorri Gianni the other commissary, who wished to finish the war, intended to possess himself of all the passes through which succours might arrive for Lucca and therefore invested Pietrasanta the capture of which would have given him Moggano and so closed up that entrance against any foreign aid; but Averardo remonstrated through Martini with the Balià, alleging that they could only gain Pietrasanta with the loss of Pisa which was daily threatened by the enemy. Gianni was immediately ordered to desist and reprimanded for hesitating to obey this treacherous mandate; wherefore the road remained open to Francis Sforza, and then followed a defeat and subsequent disasters. But Averardo would allow of no success in the army: Rinaldo at his instance was recalled from the Val di Luni where conquest attended him: Neri Capponi who

* Bruto, Stor. Fiorent., Lib. i. p. 74-5.

† Bruto not satisfied even with this and other part of Tinucci's evidence against the Medici, amplifies and exaggerates every part, instead of receiving it with that caution necessary to be observed towards a man in such circumstances.

followed in his steps also felt the influence of Averardo's jealousy, and Alemanno Salviati the man he most wanted was finally put in their place. The war then languished according to the intention of Cosimo, but the expense increased and Medician power along with it: Salviati became rich, but Rinaldo who was still serving and still successful in other quarters, was finally through Averardo's influence removed altogether; the same jealousy kept Neri Capponi unemployed for Cosimo feared his abilities and dreaded the power and popularity which success would give him with the people.

The next expressly created obstacle to a termination of the war was the vain attempt through Brunelleschi to swamp Lucca by turning the river Serchio against its walls: it is improbable that so able an engineer should have expected this to be successful, but he was perhaps a partisan and probably influenced by Cosimo, though Neri Capponi strongly objected to and laughed at the undertaking*.

Cosimo left no stone unturned to support his own greatness, and used to say to his confidants, that a drain of the money market and a loan of the produce to government on good security was the way to effect this, because he gained much by it and at the same time secured the people's admiration of his patriotism for thus risking fortune in the public service †.

No sooner had war begun than an embassy was despatched from Siena to remonstrate against it; but the Florentines declared that their hostility was directed against the tyrant alone not the people of Lucca; that on his abdication peace would be instantly restored, and if he refused the Senese were free to demand any other security they deemed necessary for their own safety which would be instantly given by the Florentines. This quieted Siena for the moment, and Florence having sent ambassadors to justify her own conduct at

* Commentario di Neri di Gino Capponi. (*Vide* Rerum. Ital. Scriptores, tom. xviii., p. 1166.

† Confessione di Tinucci.

Milan Venice and Rome, as well as to the other potentates of Italy, all of whom except Visconti returned doubtful answers, commenced the year 1430, by the continuance of a war which, begun in injustice, produced nothing but misfortune *.

This sketch of Medician intrigue as given by Tinucci will throw some light on the subsequent history of the war, and is so far unobjectionable as it agrees in its outline with other narratives: nor is there anything in the more minute details to induce a suspicion of its general authenticity as in the case of Giovanni: Cosimo's conduct bears Tinucci out; Giovanni's did not: the latter was universally liked and respected; and those who rejoiced in his death as a political adversary, mourned him as a man, and soon found themselves in a worse condition than before. "For Cosimo," says Nerli, "knowing the reputation that Giovanni had bequeathed to him and his house amongst the citizens, the people, and minor artisans; and aware of the great number of his friends and partisans in many families of noble popolani; began to attend with greater eagerness to state affairs and take a livelier interest in them than his father had done, wherefore the number of his adherents became more manifest and to the heads of the government it plainly appeared that he was advancing without impediment direct to the sovereignty" †.

This was Cosimo's grand political movement, and Tinucci's Confession casts some light on the springs that worked it: he is evidently Bruto's great authority; but Bruto himself, born about fifteen years before the fall of the republic, and associating with the bitterest enemies of the Medici especially at Lyon (where he first published his work in 1573) seems to have imbibed much of that party spirit which so disfigures almost every page of Florentine history. He was a Venetian, and the Doge Marco Foscarini thus writes of him. "To render this work

* Poggio Bracciolini, Lib. vi., pp. 172—180.

† Commentarj del Nerli, Lib. ii°, p. 38.

one of the most complete amongst the number that have appeared since the restoration of literature, Bruto perhaps wants that single condition which he wished for in others; namely, a soul uninfluenced by passion; for he never ceases biting at the house of Medici, and moreover adopts a style in writing of them that discovers his adverse spirit more than is becoming to a wise and considerate author. It is credible that such a party spirit may have gradually possessed Giovanni Michele Bruto in consequence of his intimacy at Lyon with several Florentine refugees enemies to the Medician sovereignty." His history therefore, now our principal guide until the death of Lorenzo, must in all that is adverse to the Medici, be received with that instinctive caution which usually springs up in the unbiassed mind as a natural protection against the high-wrought vehemence of party men. Like Gibbon with priests and Hume with Stuarts is Michael Bruto with the Medici *.

COTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—No change.

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* Vita e Opere di Giov. Michele Bruto, p. 25.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FROM A.D. 1430 TO A.D. 1435.

THE ultimate destination of all the so-called Italian republics was a real monarchy under democratic forms which blinded the people's eyes to the veritable nature of their government and so far answered the purpose of liberty by a persuasion that they were incontestably free. Lucca was not an exception to this rule: the family of Guinigi was one of the first in that republic, and its chief Francesco had taken a conspicuous part in the restoration of his country's independence. After his death their power alarmed the jealousy of others; many ambitious citizens united to diminish it and were for a while successful, until Lazzaro his son recovered the ascendant: still a fierce enmity existed between the Guinigi on one side, and the Fortiguerri and Rapondi on the other, which in 1392 burst into open war and ended by the death of Forteguerri and the exaltation of Lazzaro to the chief place in the commonwealth. He governed Lucca with great prudence for many years but at last fell by the hand of his own brother in the following manner: having a ward of eight years old, the only remaining descendant of the famous Castruccian race, she became the object of his brother Antonio's aspirations, but whether from her extreme youth or other cause Lazzaro refused his consent to the marriage and promised her to his younger brother Paulo. Furious at this rebuff and encouraged by their

A.D. 1430.

common brother-in-law Niccolao Sbarra, he conspired with the latter and murdered Lazzaro while writing in his cabinet; but so far from being seconded when they called on the people to rise, they were on the contrary delivered over to the tribunals, condemned, and beheaded. Paulo succeeded to all his brother's authority, and aided by the Duke of Milan became captain and lord of the Lucchese republic which he ruled with mildness if not wisdom for thirty years, until ruined by this dispute with the Florentines. Paulo Guinigi never was a friend to Florence, and if conjecture may be substituted for historical facts when the latter are unexplained, the real causes of this war seem to have been the public antipathy to *him*; a strong desire for conquest; individual ambition; intrigue, agitation; and tempting opportunity. Fortebraccio made his incursions with the true spirit of a condottiere and as regarded Florence with the sagacity of a statesman, relying on national hatred for impunity and on national ambition for ultimate support. The great majority of Florentines, dazzled by the success of a handful of brigands and urged by Lorenzo Rosso, panted for conquest; the Medici whose game was war worked every engine to stimulate the prevailing humour; but their object was prolonged hostilities, while the mass of citizens was for a rapid and brilliant conquest, with perhaps ulterior views. Hence alternate success, failure, accusations, removals, and indecisive events, until time was given for other actors to enter on the scene of this disgraceful drama.

Amongst those who were originally opposed to hostilities may certainly be placed Neri di Gino Capponi; before Fortebraccio's inroad he had in consequence of the long and recent war advised peace and an entire forgiveness of former injuries: when or why he changed is now unknown; perhaps tempted like many others by Fortebraccio's victories; and Cavalcanti not only repeats the very credible rumour that the latter acted under the auspices of Neri, but expressly names him as one of

the four audacious citizens who impatiently rose and offered to take the consequences of the war upon themselves*: Averardo, Rinaldo, and Martini were the others. "What," said they, "are you about? Why is time lost? Everything may be "recovered but loss of time. Heed not those citizens who "come here well stuffed with Paulo's gifts. Let not that which "belongs to all be denied by a few, neither allow horses and "rich velvets to be the defensive armour of your enemy. "Be ye assured that he will get no foreign aid, for the ink is "hardly dry that signed the peace of Milan, and Philip has not "yet ceased trembling at the dangers of that war. What "then are you thinking of? Why delay so glorious an en-"terprise?"

Such was their language as given by a cotemporary; and yet Bruto, without ever having seen Cavalcanti's history, rates Macchiavelli who drew largely from it, for making Rinaldo the warm advocate of war; in which the latter is also borne out by Poggio Bracciolini another cotemporary historian. Cavalcanti himself decidedly condemns the war as unjust, rapacious, and impolitic; and he, though a state prisoner at the time, was a diligent inquirer, and could scarcely have been in error as to the persons or language of four such citizens in a public assembly whose proceedings were no secret; wherefore his testimony may be fairly received as true†.

The forces immediately assembled for this war were immense: besides Niccolo Fortebraccio and Guido Antonio Lord of Faenza, there were no less than ten condottieri of the first rank and many inferior leaders engaged in the Florentine service. This military aristocracy was however anything but united or obedient, and a family feud between Bernardino della Carda of the Ubaldini, and Fortebraccio, increased the

* Neri Capponi, Commentarj Rerum. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1166.—Cavalcanti, Sto a Lib. vi., cap. ii., p. 295; cap. vi., p. 305.

† Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vi., cap. xv., and Lib. vii., cap. viii., p. 385.

disorder so much that Astorre Gianni was ordered to take the supreme command of these arrogant leaders in the name of the Florentine people. Gianni from his rapacity cruelty and corrupt inclinations, was called the "*Uccellaccio*" or bird of evil, and his gratuitous barbarity at Serravezza more than justified the appellation.

The thoroughly Guelphic inhabitants of that valley hating a Ghibeline ruler were desirous of withdrawing from Paulo Guinigi's authority and placing themselves under Florentine protection: they accordingly named one Barzo, a man of rough eloquence, and some distinction in the community, to offer the sovereignty of their valley to the commissary Astorre Gianni, then investing Pietrasanta, for the Florentine republic. Barzo was instructed to inform him that the town could hardly be taken without their assistance and yet was absolutely necessary to any successful attack on Lucca; for no aid could reach that city from the Pisan frontier, and the valley of Seravezza garrisoned by Florentines could exclude all succours from Lombardy; so that Lucca and Pietrasanta were equally dependent on Seravezza which was in fact their citadel. The territory of Seravezza is entered and defended by a narrow pass which gradually expands into a broad and spacious valley encompassed by lofty mountains, and through this ran the road from Lombardy to Pietrasanta and Lucca. Barzo in an animated speech offered this important position with the hearts and hands of its people to Florence, at the same time telling Astorri that no unworthy fears had moved them to the step, for they could easily defend themselves against every attack, even though his army were far more numerous; but they thus acted because the anger of fortune was fierce against Lucca and they had no means of turning it but by endeavouring to save all the country in their power from devastation. If therefore their offer were accepted Lucca and all its territory would quietly fall into the hands of Florence and the country remain

uninjured; and the sooner done the less the evil, and the more beneficial to Florence. "For when was it ever before "known," exclaimed Barzo with energy, "when was it ever "known that a defensible country was reduced to submission "without a frightful slaughter of the human race? It is "reserved for thee O general of the Florentines, to accomplish "this; wherefore lose not thy time but take the offered good."

The gift was accepted and the valley occupied; but how? Not by friends and allies as was expected, but by a jealous suspicious soldiery, who after garrisoning every post to the exclusion of all natives summoned them to the church, where they were to hear the commands of the Florentine people and formally confirm their allegiance. The order was strictly obeyed, but no sooner were the inhabitants assembled in and about the sacred edifice than they were startled by a sudden gleam of arms, with loud shouts and shrill cries of death to the Seravezzans ringing through the aisle: those who resisted fell, the men were made prisoners, the women shamefully dishonoured, the dwellings plundered, and the valley devastated! No cause seems to have been assigned for the perpetration of this atrocious deed, and we should with Bruto be inclined to reject the tale were it not minutely related by a cotemporary author whom Bruto never saw, followed by Macchiavelli, confirmed by Ammirato, and, as to the main fact, by Tinucci also and the public displeasure of Florence. Unscrupulous as they generally were when successful, the Florentines expressed great indignation at this treachery and loudly demanded Astorre's punishment: it was granted, and the decemvirate of war despatched the following characteristic letter as recorded by Cavalcanti.

"To Thee.—Unbeloved of thy Country."

"The numerous acts of infamy that are attributed to thee by "loyal citizens have for many days past been stunning our "ears; wherefore we enjoin and expressly command, that

" after having seen our letters no interval of time shall be con-
" ceded to thee for thy appearance at our residence. And if
" thou dost not obey, thou wilt fall and deservedly, under our
" displeasure, which will not pass away without thy most
" grievous punishment." Astorre Gianni returned, was condemned, and admonished, by which he became ineligible to public office, and was moreover compelled to restore some plunder to the Seravezzàns who were otherwise indemnified as circumstances allowed, but nothing could compensate the tarnished honour of their wives and daughters *. Rinaldo degli Albizzi a bold and able man, succeeded Gianni: he was proud, unpopular, and deemed by the vulgar avaricious, for he despised luxury and sensuality: but he infused a better spirit into the army, invested Lucca, and reduced it to such straits as alarmed the jealousy of his rivals who accused him of trading with the soldiers for their plunder. This made him return without permission to Florence and indignantly throw up his appointment: Giovanni Guicciardini succeeded, followed up Rinaldo's success, and was forced to return by a similar process, perhaps in this case with more reason; but he was absolved in defiance of the Medici by Uzzàno's influence †. These accusations, civil broils, and military failures augmented the general disorder and so equal were parties that every election was minutely analysed and the relative numbers compared, with all the eagerness of individual interest; so that by

* As an illustration of the military licence of that age take the following anecdote from Michele Bruto's History, Lib. i., p. 65 (*Volgarizzate da Stanislao Gatteschi*). " Ed io Stesso (*ciò è Bruto*) trattenutomi un tempo in Lucca curioso di saper le cose dell' età passata, udii raccontarmi da alcuni, come giovanetti saputo avevan dai padri loro, che i soldati eran usi rimandare ai parenti le bennati donne, avanzo di lor libidine, dopo avere a quelle scorciato fin dove men conveniva, la gonna; perchè così, in aumento degli altri guai, le pungesse più vivamente l' onta del violato pudore."

Orlan. Malavolti, Storia di Siena, Lib. iii., Parte ii^a, p. 19.—Macchiavelli, Stor. Fior., Lib. iv.—Cavalcanti, Storia di Firenze, Lib. vi., cap. ix., x., xi., xii. —Ammirato, Lib. xix., p. 1058.

† Nerli Commentarj, Lib. ii., p. 39. Fol. Ed.—Cavalcanti, Storia Fiorent., Lib. vi., cap. xv., xvi.

disunion and other obstacles the stream of public business became impeded disordered and overswollen, and a crisis was evidently at hand.

It has been already mentioned that the Medician party in concert with the great architect Brunelleschi conceived the barbarous idea of overwhelming Lucca by turning the river Serchio against her walls, and Tinucci asserts that it was proposed, not with any idea of succeeding but expressly to prolong the war: success indeed could scarcely have been expected; military men were silently opposed to it; Neri Capponi openly ridiculed it, withstood it in council for two days, and predicted its failure: he insisted that Paulo would at any moment be able to destroy the works and send the water back to the Serchio. Brunelleschi at his desire was despatched to examine the ground, and was too powerfully supported to receive much opposition from the army. The architect of the great dome of Florence was no light authority and he reported the feasibility of this scheme; the thoughtless multitude shouted gallantly for the swamping of Lucca because the plan was novel and destructive as well as plausible; and the TEN thus urged commanded its immediate execution*. Some plausibility was indeed attached to the notion that no common ramparts could withstand the mighty pressure of the Serchio's waters, and a sort of barbaric grandeur to the idea of washing a whole city away in its wave; but the result belied it and the Lucchese destroyed these works as often as they pleased. Their mode of stopping the enemy's labour was ingenious: Guinigi ordered a great number of pits to be dug during the night near an unfinished part of the dike each deep enough to cover a man to the eyebrow and long enough for two crossbow-men to stand and ply their weapons. Morning brought the Florentines in dense masses to labour at the works but they were received with showers of arrows by the half-buried invisible enemy and felt

* Neri Capponi, Comm. Rer. Ital. Scr., tom. xviii., p. 1170.

the shaft even before they heard the twang of the crossbow; they looked fearfully around but no foe was visible yet arrows flew thick and fast, striking upwards as if from the infernal regions, and a superstitious fear came over all the host. Thus stupefied they knew not whether going or staying would most favour the enchantment, but the longer they remained the sharper the shower and the quicker they fell under this invisible archery, until at last all fled in terror from their work: the alarm soon became general, for unable to discover the source of so inevitable a death they believed it pure devilry and would in nowise face it. The likes were eventually broken, the enemy's camp swamped, the army compelled to dislodge, and Brunelleschi retired with shame and mortification to Florence, where the inconstant stream of popularity which before had borne him up as a god, now rushed over him and the very boys in the streets sang scornful ballads in ridicule of his failure*. This as may be supposed hurt him deeply, nevertheless there was no diminution of the excitement and sanguine expectations of Florence. The conquest of Lucca was not only considered certain but bore public ambition onward to more distant objects, and even the future acquisition of Siena floated in visionary splendour before the people: the reduction of that state was now so familiarly discussed, that the very children chanted prophetic distichs on the subject†. As smoke warns us of fire, said the Senese, so do these trifles indicate evil, wherefore let us succour the seignior of Lucca, render this chanting harmless, and revenge all the injuries we have received from the Florentines. Such ebullitions of public feeling were prudently repressed by the government, and Antonio Petrucci was despatched as a mediator between the belligerent states. Antonio on his arrival demanded an audience, but was repeatedly rebuffed by

1401.

* Coment. di Neri Capponi, Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1169.—Tinucci, Confessione, MS.—Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xx., pp. 1061, 1062.—Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. xvii.

† Such as:—
"Ave Maria grazia piena
Avuto Lucca avremo Siena," and
"Guarti (guardati) Siena
Chè Lucca triema."

frivolous excuses and recommendations to return at a more convenient season. This mockery of the war party was rendered more pungent by their adversaries, who told him that he was designedly scorned and insulted; whereupon after many days of vain expectation Antonio indignantly quitted the town, repeating a common proverb*. "You have reckoned without your host," said he to those that accompanied him to the gate, "and I say so that you may repeat it from me to your Seignory "as most suitable to their proud demeanour. Tell them how "Antonio Petrucci demanded peace for Lucca, and now from "the Senese he flings you menaces of war." He then quitted the city. The Senese were furious at this treatment and Antonio tried to stir up their passions to immediate hostilities but the government still prevailed: burning with anger he raised a considerable force for Guinigi, but Florence remonstrated and fearing the result he mustered them on the ecclesiastical frontier, passed the Pisan territory unchecked, entered the Lucchese state, and aided by a company of Genoese crossbows broke though the Florentine legions, their bastions and their dikes and entered Lucca in triumph. This was the first fruit of his indignation, nor did it end there; on the contrary he so worried the besiegers by his activity that Florence despatched another embassy to insist on his recal: the request was complied with, but Antonio refused obedience as inconsistent with the honour of a condottiere engaged in his lord's service; he then left Lucca well supplied and repaired to Milan with the Lucchese envoys for the purpose of engaging Philip Visconte in defence of that state. Petrucci was further exasperated because the Florentines had prevented his being Podestà of Lucca therefore had double cause to act against them and all the vigour of Guinigi's defence was in fact the result of his spirit, for though nearly every fortified

* "Una cosa pensa il ghiotto
Ed un' altra il tavernajo
E altra colui che spende il mal dennjo."

town in the provinces of Lunigiana, Garfagnana, Valeriana and other places was captured Lucca still stood, undaunted uninjured and alone*.

A new Balià was appointed by Florence in June and ambassadors despatched to Milan and Venice to reëxplain her conduct and justify the war; the latter was friendly, and from the former came assurances of approval and offers of assistance which, though duly appreciated, prevented the ambassador's recal.

The troubles of war were now fearfully augmented by pestilence; the Florentine poor suffered miserably, and in consequence of the great drain of money to support this contest no aid could be administered to them nor any funds procured. The interest of money was in fact so enormous that to alleviate public distress a decree issued for the admission of Jews to a permanent domicile in Florence and the privilege of lending money at an interest not exceeding four denari for each lira per month, or from twenty to nearly twenty-two per cent. per annum, according to lunar or solar reckoning†.

At Lucca Paulo Guinigi, persuaded against his own opinion by his son Ladislaus and some principal counsellors, especially Piero Cenami and Giovanni da Ghivezzano, sent Lorenzo Bonvisi and Salvestro Trento to Milan for the purpose of soliciting aid against Florence; but they were secretly instructed by some distinguished citizens to offer the sovereignty of Lucca to Visconte and to deliver Paulo into his hands, under the belief that he was secretly negotiating for their sale to Florence‡. This suspicion was artfully raised by a stratagem of the TEN, who addressed two apparently responsive letters to Paulo Guinigi, and to the principal citizens of Lucca. The first lauded Paulo's implicit faith in the Florentines and large offers were added if, according to the hopes he had already given, Lucca should be surrendered: the last was

* Cavalcanti, Stor. Fior., Lib. vi., cap. folio xix. from xix. to xx.—Orlando Malavolti, Stor. di Siena, Lib. ii., Parte iii[a],

† Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1063.

‡ Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. xx., xxi.

in praise of a resolution supposed to have been taken by the citizens to kill or expel their tyrant, which it was affirmed would at once terminate the war because Florence fought only against Paulo, not against the Lucchese nation. These despatches were sent with wrong directions, the last reaching Paulo, the first falling into the hands of the citizens. By this unworthy trick one of two results was expected; either Guinigi, from not knowing whom to trust, would come to terms with them; or the citizens by violently getting rid of him would fall into dissension and be more easily mastered *.

According to their open instructions the Lucchese ambassadors first demanded in Paulo's name a sufficient force to repel the Florentines: in that of the people—nothing. But instead thereof was proffered the state's sovereignty which from Paulo's treachery they declared their right to dispose of, as the sale of themselves and country was the return he had made for thirty years' obedience after placing the sceptre in his hands. They further pledged themselves to deliver Paulo and all his family in chains to Visconte, and Visconte accepted the offer but without rejecting Paulo's demand, which he thought would facilitate its accomplishment †.

The result of this interview was immediately communicated to Niccolò Piccinino then in Visconte's service who was commanded to march and achieve so glorious an enterprise. "Be-
"lieve me O Niccolò," said Philip, "events proceed conjointly
"from the gods and the working of sagacious men; for by
"the latter are known both the disposition of the heavens
"and the powers of the human mind: assemble thy soldiers;
"give thy victorious banners to be sported with by Æolus
"the god of winds; seek the frontiers of Tuscany; refresh
"thyself in the limpid waters of the Magra; pass the full stream

* Anchiennes Croniques de Pise en Ytalie.—Mazzarosa, Storia di Lucca, tom. i°, pp. 278, 279.

† Cavalcanti, Stor. Fioren., Lib. vi. cap. xxii., xxiii.

" of the Serchio; and thrust thy lances into the livers and " bowels of our cowardly enemies! Go, and reside where the " chief citizens call thee; enter the city; from Paulo thou " will have the reward of thy labour; they will deliver him " into thy hands; and then bring him and every other that " they give thee, under a powerful escort to Milan! O Niccolò " thy glory will transform thee from mortal to immortal, and " thy fame shall endure for ever!" This address was strongly seasoned with promises and flattery, for in both Visconte excelled; but Piccinino was of too rough a stamp to glide easily into such treachery. " The brighter my fame," said he, " the " more palpable will be the slightest stain; and hitherto it " has been unsullied with anything but what falsehood has " uttered against me: by the senseless multitude I have been " calumniated, but that I consider as praise; and my fame " would be so much the more tarnished by this enterprise as " I am more clear in fidelity and loyalty. Wherefore I pray " thee O prince to excuse my not moving in this matter. I " will remind thee of a saying rife in Tuscany on the subject " of national character. They are wont to exclaim, '*Tosco* " *rosso, Lombardo nero, e Romagnolo d'ogni pelo.*' I am a " Tuscan from the very lap of the Tuscans; but my colour is " written *Bruno;* wherefore I am not a reputed master of " such matters; but search Romagna which according to the " proverb is fruitful in them; or you may haply find amongst " your own followers those who are admirably adapted to such " service and will feel proud in doing that which to me is replete " with sin and infamy. I believe that the gods have given me " so many victories only for my zeal fidelity and frankness: " perhaps I have not more of these than others and if better " men exist would to God I were equal to them! When the " Florentines see Paulo and Ladislaus led away captives their " forces and efforts will be redoubled, and then it will be my " duty to march because all will be open war; and it will

"moreover be just and merciful, to succour the distressed and "protect the women and children"*.

As the embassy of Petrucci and his coadjutors was secret it is uncertain whether the fact became known at Florence or not, but it was about this time that Lorenzo de' Medici arrived as ambassador at Milan; and whether his conduct were honest but imbecile, or that he merely played Cosimo's game as Tinucci asserts, is difficult to prove; if the latter his supineness is simply explained; and as no effectual step seems to have been taken by him to check Visconte there is strong reason to believe in that intrigue, for he is described by Cavalcanti as a sharp investigator who was proof against all the Duke of Milan's flattery and deception†.

On Piccinino's refusal Philip despatched Trenta and Bonvisi to Francesco Sforza at Tortona with their original instructions strengthened by his own approbation, and simultaneously released that general from the Milanese service on pretence of his engagement being expired, with permission to look after his own interests in the kingdom of Naples for which a military force was requisite. Sforza, then generally called the "*Contecino*," was not troubled with Piccinino's scruples therefore engaged himself nominally in Paulo's service while really acting for Visconte.‡ This intrigue became known to the TEN who being principally of the Uzzaneschi faction immediately sent Boccacini Alamanni, an old friend of the elder Sforza and therefore supposed acceptable to the younger, with ample funds to turn his march from Lucca. Sforza looked only to his own interests and avoided committing himself but managed to create a favourable, or at least uncertain belief of his friendly intentions in the envoy's mind until all was ready and his movement cautiously begun§. He was on one side incited to a shameful

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. xxvi.

† Ibid.

‡ Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vi., cap. xxvii.—Ammirato, Stor. Fior., Lib. xx., p. 1063.—Poggio, Istoria Fior., Lib. vi., p. 183.

§ Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. xxviii.

act of treachery by Philip and the Lucchese commissioners; and on the other to refuse his aid and become the friend of Florence: bribery was rife on both; but as he pursued the enterprise it is probable that the Florentine offers were inferior to those of Visconte, for to Francesco Sforza says Cavalcanti, infamy or good repute, faith or perjury, were of equal value provided that his own affairs prospered *. Wherefore, continues this author, "Let all believe that as by men, men are generated, so does their condition proceed from soil and climate, their inclinations from heaven, their customs from the community, and their social laws from the wise; all these are more or less according to the liberty of our will, and men and provinces not only produce divers characters in their rational inhabitants but even in irrational creatures and the whole inanimate world; all are affected by the nature of their country. The falcons of Calabria, the horses of Puglia, the mules of Spain, the wines of Crete, the wheat of Loro, the oil of Signa, the saffron of Val-d'Elsa are all remarkable; and thus it is with men.† In Romagna there ever was a dearth of sincerity and faith: amongst Lombards an abundance of cruelty, and in Tuscany cheating and an inordinate love of gain" ‡.

Francesco Sforza's arrival without opposition on the banks of the Serchio where he defeated Fortebraccio was, as before noticed, the result of abandoning the siege of Pietrasanta; the sieges of Lucca and Monte Carlo were instantly raised, the Florentine army retired to Librafatta, or Ripafratta, on the Pisan road; and in July 1430 Sforza entered Lucca more as the master and conqueror of Paulo than his retainer and friend. Without showing any respect to the unlucky seignior he sternly

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. xxix.

† Loro, in the upper Val d'Arno, was famous for wheat: Signa, near Florence, was as it appears, then celebrated for its oil; and saffron was anciently grown in Val d'Elsa. These reflections are inserted because they exhibit the writer's train of thought, and as a record of celebrated natural productions of the time, as well as of native character.

‡ Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vi., cap. xxix. and xxxiii. This is probably meant by Piccinino's "*Tosco Rosso.*"

ordered him to disburse certain moneys because as he truly said, where that failed there was much misery; and "do it quickly," added Sforza, "for time flies so faster than arrows and its speed makes it all the more precious." Large sums were immediately collected and Ladislaus marched cheerfully with him to recapture the Florentine conquests; but after a successful campaign they were repulsed in an attack on Pescia by the bravery of Giovanni Malavolti who successfully defended it when abandoned in the most shameful manner by his commander Ghiacceto *.

Genoa, who owned Visconte's rule but claimed the right of independence, at his secret instigation now acted as a free state and sent ambassadors to remonstrate with Florence against the war, but being taunted with their subjection they left that city in wrath, united with Lucca, lent her 15,000 ducats, and received Pietrasanta and Motrone as security †. This new ally with Sforza's aid, changed the aspect of the war which now menaced Florence in her own territory; the Venetians were therefore urged to attack Philip for a breach of the treaty of Ferrara, while Guido di Montefeltro Count of Urbino, was in consequence of the quarrels between Fortebraccio and Bernardino, made generalissimo of the Florentine forces. Philip sent an embassy to explain and excuse his conduct; but neither Florence nor Venice were deceived and preparations were made for hostilities in Lombardy ‡. Meanwhile Sforza returned to Lucca with further demands; but Paulo's coffers were empty and seeing no hopes of safety he began or was believed to have begun a negotiation with the Florentines. Whether true or false it served as a pretext for Antonio Pucci, Cenami, Che-

* Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 184.—Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vi., cap. xxix.—Orlan. Malavolti, Stor. di Siena, Lib. ii°, Parte iii^a, folio 19.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1064.—Giov. Cagnola, Storia di Milano, Lib. iii°, p. 39.

† Interiano, Istorie Genovisi, Lib. vi., p. 174.—Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 186.—Gio. Morelli Ricordi, p. 92.—Giustiniani, Annali di Genoa, Lib. v°, carta clxxxix.

‡ Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1065.

vezzano to conspire with Sforza and about forty other citizens, who availing themselves of Paulo's confidence arrested him and all his family and sent them in chains to Milan, where Ladislaus and this mild but unfortunate prince soon after expired.

Sforza finding himself unable to remain longer in Lucca began negotiating with the Florentines on pretence of an old and probably fictitious debt due by them to his father: he made a truce with their general, received 50,000 florins and left the city, now weakened by plague and famine, to the enemy's mercy, with a promise to return in the spring *.

Philip being still pressed by the Lucchese and his own desires, secretly ordered Niccolò Piccinino, then nominally in the Genoese service, to march with a large force on Lucca towards which he instantly pushed forward with a chosen body of cavalry. Fortebraccio advised the government not to give battle but rather adopt his plan of defence; he was unheeded, but Urbino had orders not to risk the safety of the army. Piccinino meanwhile appeared on the Serchio, assembled all his troops and forcing a passage across that river carried joy and abundance into Lucca.

During his march the whole army was struck with wonder at a marvellous occurrence which they witnessed while crossing the plain of Sarzana. Daylight suddenly became obscured by the movement of what seemed a wide-spreading cloud which on nearer approach proved to be one vast flock of crows who coming up in the army's rear shaded all the heavens and by the simultaneous vibration of their innumerable wings agitated every terrestrial object even more than a common zephyr. The broad shadow of this airy multitude for a while completely veiled the sunlight and the troops halted in doubt and superstitious terror, thinking that as a single crow was deemed a messenger of evil, such multitudes might be expected to bring

* Neri Capponi, Com. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1170.—Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 185.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1065. — Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. xxx., xxxiii.

infinite mischief. While gazing stedfastly on this object they beheld in the opposite direction of Piombino a greater mass of these ill-omened birds who were rapidly winging their way to meet it and when immediately above the troops both the feathered hosts met in fierce and mortal combat: their shock was so strange and terrible, says Cavalcanti, that vast quantities of each dropped dead upon the ground with broken legs and wings; some with wounds so large that the bowels were trailing from their mangled bodies, and they fell in such numbers that many sacks might have been filled with the slain. The cavalry dismounted merely to handle them and be able to say that they not only saw this wonder but touched the actors in it with their own hands. After several hours of obstinate contest the Lombard flight bore down their enemies, spread triumphantly over all the heavens, and flying towards the shores of Piombino finally disappeared.

Piccinino instantly availed himself of this phenomenon to reassure his soldiers, and infused new spirit into the most timid by crying out: "Thus the divine intelligence promises success! "Away! Let us march to victory! Even as you beheld the "long line of aërial warriors that just now followed us clear "the wide heavens and disappear in the quarter of our ene- "mies, so will we trample on the wicked ones." Thus saying he bade the trumpets sound to horse and resumed his march towards Lucca *.

When he arrived on the deep and swollen Serchio the whole country resounded with the din of armies, now only divided by its stream. "The neighing of horses," says Cavalcanti, "the clang of arms, the beat of drums, the shouts of soldiers, the noise of instruments, and the braying of trumpets was so great as to fill everything with wonder to the very depths of earth. The ground seemed to move, the fowls of the air

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. iv.

abandoned their element, but more from the recent battle above than the tumult of men below. Within the city women and children were seen moving barefooted in solemn march to the temples and holy places, mingled with priests and monks, chanting their hymns, and offering supplications for their own safety and our destruction; all the citizens were in arms and ready to join that battle preparing without the walls." Niccolò Piccinino was seen riding to and fro on the river's bank promising rewards and distinctions, and infusing a bold and cheerful spirit into his followers, while the housetops of Lucca were covered with females and aged men praying in tears for victory.

In this state of suspense a Florentine knight with his followers dashed suddenly into the stream and charged bravely on the enemy; he was rudely handled and lost three horses, but what was worse, this rash act discovered the ford to Niccolo about which he had previously been in some anxiety *. Fearing that Urbino would allow of his entrance into Lucca without resistance and thus shut him up in a place that must have soon been in further want of provisions, he across the water verbally demanded this permission on purpose to insure the enemy's refusal and at the same time give notice of his intention to the besieged. The Florentines he thought would thus believe him apprehensive and therefore become more eager for battle, which was precisely what he wanted, because without defeating them he could not effectually raise the siege. Urbino for the same reasons would have allowed him a free passage sooner than risk a general engagement with somewhat inferior force but was overruled, and Niccolo after an animated address to his men in which he made good use of the late aërial battle to inspire a superstitious confidence, gave the word to begin.

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. ix.—Neri, Comment., Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., pp. 1171-2.

Three squadrons of men-at-arms lowering their lances instantly dashed into the stream and pushing gallantly across were charged with equal spirit; they were repulsed but not pursued, and Piccinino seeing the enemy in a disorderly cluster crossed the river with his whole force. The conflict now became fierce and obstinate; many feats of personal prowess adorned the annals of that day; the Florentines fought hard and well, but with little concert in consequence of personal quarrels; the besieged made a bold sally, aided by a detachment which Piccinino had previously thrown into Lucca, and fully occupied the lord of Faenza with all his followers; but the battle though brave was short and Florence was defeated *.

The destruction of fifteen hundred of her best cavalry, a rapid and disorderly retreat on Pisa, and the entire loss of Lucca were its results. In that city prayers and tears were turned to smiles and joy; the conqueror was welcomed in triumph; tables of refreshments were spread at the city gates; rich wines and cool drinks were now produced notwithstanding the general distress, and gracefully offered to the soldiers by groups of young women who danced round the victorious liberator chanting their orisons, while the bells rang loud and merrily, and priests sang hymns and psalms; and all was pleasure joy and festivity. Artists were immediately engaged to paint the victor's portrait, "and thus says Cavalcanti keep him perpetually before mortal eyes and to the future, present" †.

Part of the vanquished saved themselves at Ripafratta, part took refuge in Pisa; Florence itself was agitated fearing the loss of that city; and the reproaches of faction, and general disunion were fearfully augmented: Niccolò was in fact urged by the malcontents to advance instantly on Pisa which it is said he might have taken in the general alarm; but

* Neri Capponi, Comment., Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., pp. 1171-2.—Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vii., cap. xii. and xiv.—Poggio, Lib. v°, p. 187.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1068.—Boninsegni, Lib. i., p. 34.

† Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vii., cap. xv.

his first object was to clear the lines of communication with Lombardy and Genoa and perhaps not to commit Visconte by doing more at that moment than relieve the city of Lucca. Afterwards nearly all the contado of Pisa fell before him including Montemagno and Pontetetto the great military magazines of Florence. Many other places surrendered by means of Antonio Count of Pontedera a Pisan exile, and this occasion was not lost by his countrymen to strike a blow in the cause of liberty, for the Pisans though vanquished were unsubdued by four-and-twenty years of tyranny; their spirit still stood high and was ever indignant at the rough and detested government of Florence *.

The Count of Urbino had orders to defend Pisa; Fortebraccio marched to his old station at Fucecchio; Neri Capponi and Lorenzo da Pisa were to place Pescia in a state of defence; Bernardo di Gualdo was recalled from Pontremoli and sent to guard the Valdinievole; and on the eighth of December, six days after the battle, Francesco Tornabuoni repaired to Venice with news of the defeat and urged an immediate irruption into Lombardy; for this the lord of Faenza was promised with all his followers and two thousand men besides; or if too late in the season there, they were urged to send a reënforcement without delay to Florence which was now reduced to purely defensive warfare. It must have been at this crisis that Averardo de' Medici hurried up from Mugello to the metropolis and, as Tinucci asserts, feasted the citizens into electing a new Balià with Cosimo and Puccio Pucci amongst its members.

Public affairs had now become so unpromising, the city so divided, and Niccolò's progress so rapid, that all the enemies of Florence were watching their advantage and the principal citizens of Pisa held secret consultations about the successful issue of revolt: they were all people of distinction led

A.D. 1431.

* Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 188. — Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. xx.—S. Ammirato, Storia Fior., Lib. xx., p. 1069.

on by the Lanfranchi, Gualandi, Sismondi and about six more of the most ancient name and reputation. Meeting continually they excited each other by enumerating all the wrongs of Pisa and the insolence of Florence: how "their dignities were trampled on, their honours torn from them; the Pandects, those wise and reverenced laws that illuminated the human mind, and with admirable measure meted out impartial justice, harmonising the weak with the strong, the greater with the less; those honoured relics the Florentines had carried off in triumph to adorn the musty shelves of their national libraries. How they, the Pisans, had been compelled to pledge the sacred girdle, and in spite of themselves had then lost it for ever: how their unhappy countrymen had been dispersed like the Jews of old through every nation: how their women, who before had been accounted the most chaste, were now corrupted; and their city degraded from the noblest to the vilest in the world. The honourable buildings, the regal palaces, the towers that seemed once to touch the clouds, were now razed to the very surface of the earth, and Pisa had become a den of thieves, a sink of infamy, and a receptacle for every vagabond." Thus mutually encouraged they agreed on augmenting their numbers, and finally assembled to arrange every detail in the chapel of the Gambacorti. Giovanni Gualandi, the most eloquent and one of the noblest citizens, addressed the assembly, and after having proved, according to the style of those ages, by the example of almost every species of animal, that liberty was natural to man, he declared that the hour was come for his compatriots to doff their servile robes and boldly free themselves from Florentine oppression. Antonio of Pontedera their friend and countryman was abroad and active, the worthy comrade of Piccinino, whose assistance would thus be secured: the Lucchese would also aid them: the power of Visconte; the wrongs of Lucca; the time; the circumstances; all cried aloud for liberty and vengeance. Arms, adherents, and secrecy were then recommended; any

waste of time above all things deprecated, for time was ever lost when not followed by adequate results; but beyond all else, he conjured his fellow-citizens to die free rather than live in servitude. The last hour of our existence, added Gualandi, is not death; but that life which is tamely dragged along in unjust and tyrannical servitude is real death to a generous and independent mind. As Christ's birth into this sinful world was his true death, his veritable crucifixion; and his death only a return to everlasting glory, so shall the last day of our life be the first of perpetual repose. Your enemies the Gambacorti with their Bergolini faction sold both themselves and you to the Florentines; now let your deeds restore the Raspanti to their high station and along with them the liberties of your country; and if you fail, why then you become compulsory servants, but not sold and abject slaves. Servants at least are contented with the fair price of their labour, but slaves are ever the receptacle of others' passions and injuries, and thus become the prop and nourishment of their most heinous sins. Do not believe that long continuance in this servitude will render such masters compassionate; compassion reigns in the breast of the magnanimous, cruelty in that of the perverse. How can they pity you who have no pity on themselves? Look at their city! You will find none there who have arrived at the third generation, that still enjoy the riches their grandfathers bequeathed! Banish all hope then; for hope is vain; expect nothing from the Florentines. Remember their ancient and glorious families and to what they have reduced them! Poverty and misery, in public and in private, have taken hold of them; they are scattered through the country and herd with the sheep and the swine; certes they now can tame young bulls and comb the yielding earth with plough and harrow: they do it with their own hands: they dig the vines and prune their useless shoots and touch not them that bear; they have been taught that of which they had before been ignorant or unaccustomed to. And

why is this if not because the Florentine community is poisoned by the infusion of a base crowd of the vilest and lowest caste: there are now so many "Stucchi," and so many "Truffi," and "Nini" and "Tini" and "Bencini" that I scarcely believe so motley a collection of animals could be found in the Libyan deserts, wherefore expect no compassion from a people so wicked and insatiable; neither look for, I will not say liberty, but even the most trifling kindness. Be quick then O valiant citizens; arm; haste to the market-place; drive fear and pity from your breasts, and slay your execrable tyrants: seize the nearest gate, call on Count Antonio for assistance, on Piccinino for present favour, and on the friendly exertions of Lucca. Tell that people that your freedom is their safety, and bid them remember how your forefathers gave them liberty when Florence received them fettered from Mastino della Scala. Public injuries should be avenged by a temperate chastisement; public benefits rewarded by public justice: and justice is only the rendering of what was his own to each individual: the pride of Florence will thus be humbled and our injuries revenged. Look at your city;—your fallen palaces, your polluted beds, your dishonoured virgins, your violated widows: remember all this, be bold and fear not! None will speak for *them*, none against *you*; all will deem your rising just and reasonable: your towns are in Piccinino's hands; your enemy's force depressed in spirit, scattered, and comparatively trifling: the victory of Lucca has tamed their pride; but you still have strength and daring, and these have ever subdued the timed. Will you who are citizens fear to attempt what your very peasants have already accomplished? Only follow my counsel and you will acquire eternal glory great benefits and inestimable joy. Your fame will be the messenger to recall that multitude of expatriated citizens who disdained the galling fetters of another's will: Sicily and every Christian land are full of them, but all will return at the sound of your glorious achievements, and will sing of you as saints and demi-

gods, while your exploits will be incomparable to anything but the vast and boundless ocean*.

When all was settled the conspirators dispersed; but unfortunately for them, a woman who was at her devotions in a neighbouring chapel overheard all and immediately revealed the plot to Ricci Archbishop of Pisa, a stern prelate who lost no time in taking effectual measures against them: he rode completely armed through the streets, more like a paladin than a priest; reënforced every guard, supplied the fortress, and in concert with the captain had everything in readiness; but all passed off quietly: great severity was afterwards used; many of the conspirators were exiled; and from this period perhaps may be dated the malignant and destructive policy of Florence towards the unfortunate and devoted Pisa †.

Amongst Piccinino's numerous conquests was a place called La Pietra then existing in the Val d' Evola, besides several other towns, all gained through the treachery of Rosso de' Rossi a Florentine officer of authority in that district. It was doubtless excessively galling to the government in addition to all their other ills to see the country betrayed by its own citizens; but their mode of administering law in this matter will give a fair notion of what the justice of a republican government and the ties of kindred were, at that epoch, in Florence.

* This is the substance of Gualandi's long oration, as given without a date by Cavalcanti, (Lib. vii., cap. xxi.), about a serious conspiracy not noticed by, and probably not known to, other writers, unless the Milanese historian, Biglia, alludes to it. (*Rer. Ital. Script.*, tomo xix., p. 148). The speech given by Cavalcanti (here much abridged) was probably the substance of what was uttered, but arranged in the historian's own manner, and is now given because, whether spoken by Gualandi or not, it is a cotemporary's exposition of the evils of Florentine rule, and probably the expression of popular feeling amongst the oppressed; and this too by an enemy, a noble Florentine, one of those victims of popular oppression who were reduced by excessive taxation, first to a prison, and then to till the soil with his own hands. These cotemporary orations, if they do nothing else, at least embody the popular feeling of the day, and are consequently interesting and instructive.

† Anchiennes Croniques de Pise en Ytalie, from Paris MS.

The Seignory sent for Rosso's nearest relations and thus addressed them. "What is the reason of your kinsman's "enmity? If his disgraceful conduct did him any service "there would be less to blame; but he robs himself and "enriches our enemies. What would ye say if upon your "heads were to fall that vengeance that is due to his treachery? "Who is there that would blame us except our enemies? And "be ye certain that we know so well how to do it that the "punishment may be felt ere the crime be completed." The Rossi comprehending the full force of this address implored for mercy and a short respite, and in the space of a few days Rosso del Bonica de' Rossi fell by his own nephews' hands; while his two sons, said to be no less culpable than he, and an innocent daughter with an infant at the breast were placed in the hands of government. Cosimo de' Medici touched with pity for the mother and child humbly implored the Seignory not to allow such cruelty to be inflicted at their hands and offered himself as security for both, promising to produce them whenever required. "Guido"*, says Cavalcanti, "being one of the priors answered this good man in a loud voice and with all his father's "fury. 'Cosimo, understand clearly, that while we hold this "station the commencement and termination of every proposal "and opinion shall rest with ourselves, and neither thou nor "any other individual citizen shall oppose us; for we are the "law, and we are the judge. Depart in peace and attempt not "to become the steward and manager of the commonwealth.' "At these insulting words the patient Cosimo retired giving no "sign of any feeling but humility. Now I know not which was "greatest Cosimo's humility or Guido's haughtiness"†.

* This transaction probably occurred in March or April, 1431, as the only prior of that name given by two ancient MS. "*Prioriste*" in my possession, or by Morelli, in his printed Priorista, from May 1430 to May 1433, is *Guido di Beso Magalotti*, although there appears to have been a gonfalonier of justice, called Guido di Tommaso Deti, in March and April, 1433. We are not told what was the fate of the lady and her child.

† Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., *cap.* xxiv.

Notwithtsanding this example no less than fourteen towns revolted in favour of Piccinino during one night, all sending their keys, and generally imprisoning the Florentine authorities; yet amidst the sharp oppression and barbarity of the time, it is refreshing to find that some of the latter were spared in consequence of their just government; and with their families carried safe across the frontier by the revolted people; but such exceptions only prove the general rigour of Florentine sway.

In this state of things Micheletto Atendola of Cotignolo a nephew of Sforza was made captain of the Florentine army, to which some spirit was soon after restored by an advantage gained at Colle against Count Alberigo da Barbiano Piccinino's successor by Bernardino degli Ubaldini and also by the gallant behaviour of Ramondo Mannelli and Papi Tedaldi, which cast still greater credit on the Florentine arms. Stung with a late defeat on the Po where they were completely routed by a Genoese admiral the Venetians sent a squadron to the Tuscan coast and Riviera of Genoa to revenge this injury: they however seem to have been shy of coming to a general engagement until the Florentines tired of such harassing inactivity fitted out two galleys under the above officers and either forced or shamed them into an attack on the Genoese squadron. Principally by their own daring courage, the latter were completely beaten near Portofino and their admiral Francesco Spinola and eight galleys captured*. But long ere this Niccolò Piccinino had ridden triumphant over most of the Florentine territory, capturing or destroying town after town from Pontremoli to the gates of Arezzo which would also have fallen had he not unaccountably stopped to besiege the little fortress of Gargonza on his march. This unchecked career of victory

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vi., cap. xxix., xxx.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1076.—Raccolta d'Elogi d'Uomini Illustri Toscani, vol. i°.—Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 194.—Giov. Morelli, p. 107.

rivetted his favour with Philip Visconte while it raised the jealousy of Niccolo Tolentino who was fed by that prince on promises alone, wherefore the latter quitted Milan in disgust and engaged with the Florentines who lent him to the pontiff with two thousand followers, and the consequence of this defection was Piccinino's recall to defend Lombardy now threatened by the league. Pope Martin the Fifth's decease in February 1431 brought joy to Florence which during all his reign he had never ceased to hate, and the election of Gabriel Condelmerio cardinal of Siena and a Venetian who assumed the pontificate as Eugenius IV. was scarcely less satisfactory. His first measure was an attempt to restore tranquillity; but this was done with so decided a leaning towards Florence as to disgust the Senese, Visconte, and all her numerous enemies *. War therefore became certain, and the league between Florence and Venice was more closely rivetted; but Siena in concert with Genoa, both of whom had long been favouring Lucca and were encouraged by Piccinino, soon broke into open war; she commenced hostilities under Visconte's general Alberigo, and by means of Genoa seduced the seignior of Piombino a recent ward of the Florentines, to take up arms against them †. The incursions of these neighbours in Val d'Ambra increased Florentine difficulties and an attempt was made to engage Francesco Sforza; but true to his own interest he was bought off by the promise of Visconte's infant daughter Bianca in marriage ‡.

To cope with him and Piccinino, Carmagnola, notwithstanding his strange conduct in the late war, was again placed at the head of the Venetian armies and he advanced into the Cremonese state but was defeated with great loss by Sforza on the sixth of June, 1431.

* Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1071. — Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 191. Giov. Cambi, p. 182.
† Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1072. — ‡ Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1070.

A flotilla consisting of one hundred vessels of all descriptions was equipped on the Po and under Niccolo Trevigiano moved straight on Cremona; Visconte had also prepared his squadron under the command of the Genoese admiral Grimaldi, or as some say, Pacino Eustachio of Pavia who had formerly suffered a defeat, probably both were employed; but Venice was too quick, and excelled the Milanese fleet in numbers, size, and equipment so that for some time they had command of the river. The hostile armaments ultimately met at Bina near Cremona and fought until night parted them, with the loss of seven Milanese galleys. Sforza and Piccinino who had manned the squadron from their troops and feared an attack from Carmagnola during the next day's fight, deceived the Venetian general by means of some pretended deserters who reported that they were preparing to attack him in the heat of the naval battle. Whether Carmagnola were really deceived, or, as the Venetians thought, had come unwillingly to war is still unsettled; but he acted as if he were, and not only remained under arms all day but refused any succour to the admiral. Sforza and Piccinino on the contrary reënforced the fleet with almost all their troops and next day, towards the end of June, the most obstinate naval battle then on record was the consequence.

The Venetian galleys took a position with their bows to the stream and all chained together the better to resist it: the Milanese less in number but crowded with men bore gallantly down on their antagonists; both fleets were glittering with steel and rough with pikes and lances. The adverse admirals had a national hatred then far from extinct; the two Milanese generals served personally on board inspiriting their troops as if on the field of battle: the defect of a weaker line of vessels was compensated by a stronger personal force on the side of Milan, while on that of Venice the last day's success animated every breast to new and more daring courage.

Thus prepared the fight began, and the struggle was long and fierce; but Grimaldi observed that the Po had risen during the night and at that season was unlikely to remain so: he therefore watched its fall, and cheering his men to a little longer struggle seconded by the efforts of both generals, looked anxiously for the grounding of the large Venetian galleys while his own lighter craft would still be afloat and able to attack them. All turned out fortunate; the stream began to fall, the water shoaled rapidly; the Venetians felt their galleys take the ground and turning all their attention to this accident exposed themselves to the whole fury of Grimaldi who renewed the assault with double vigour: Sforza and Piccinino fought like private men; the latter was severely wounded in the neck and lamed for life, but all dashed boldly on to victory while the Venetians struggled for existence: their admiral's galley at last struck, he himself escaping; but this was a signal of defeat and Grimaldi remained the conqueror. About twenty-nine galleons and eight thousand prisoners were captured; the number of dead must have been immense but is not recorded, and Venice was furious: yet the government looked in profound silence on Carmagnola with all the mystery of its nature; no reproach, not an outward sign was suffered to awaken his apprehensions; but a squadron immediately sailed to vindicate national honour on the Tuscan and Genoese coasts the result of which has been already narrated *. On some erroneous suspicion of the Senese, Count Alberigo was arrested and sent prisoner to Milan where the Duke absolved him; but Bernardino who had quitted the Florentines succeeded and waged destructive war against them while Micheletto remained so idle and indifferent, particularly in purposely neglecting a fair occasion of surprising Lucca, that Niccolo Tolentino was ordered to super-

* Corio, Storie Milanese, Parte v^a, fol. 329.—Boninsegni, Lib. i., p. 40.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1074.—Cagnola, Stor. Milan., Lib. i^o, p. 40, who does not mention Grimaldi.

sede him. This general had some immediate success, but receiving undue praise was imprudently tempted to attack Bernardino at a place called the Capanne in Val d'Elsa where at the moment of defeat Micheletto came generously up to his rescue and routed the enemy with great slaughter *.

This raised the public spirits; but meanwhile the whole rural population of Pisa revolted and elected ten persons of a superior class with authority to govern and tax them for all the purposes of war, resolving to strike for Visconte while his forces were engaged in regular hostilities: besides which a strong body of rustic youth were completely armed and fought under their countryman Count Antonio da Pontedera the most active of Visconte's partisans. Thus in addition to foreign war an extensively organised rebellion pervaded the whole Pisan state, and these untrained clowns battled with such valour and bitterness as shows the excessive and universal detestation of Florentine rule, for no justly governed although conquered people would have fought so rancorously. "Like mad dogs, their bite is mortal," said the men-at-arms: "we have not to grapple with village clowns but with demons of hell." Wherefore none of them were bold enough to meet this furious peasantry on equal terms; "unless," says Cavalcanti, "it were those who rather loved the requiem of death than the pleasures of this world †.

Giovanni Fiesco lord of Pontremoli feeling the awkward position of his states which were alternately the prey of both parties, now sold that town to Visconte; the war then became universal, malignant, destructive and attended with far more than common horrors; there was no present mercy and a dismal prospect for the future: famine stalked with withering footsteps over all the land; fear and suspicion lurked in every eye; and town and country, hamlet and village, castle and cottage, were promiscuously overwhelmed in one vast flood of unutterable woe,

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. xl., xli. xliii, xlv.
† Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. xlv.

The condition of Pisa was lamentable: Giuliano di Guccio was the Florentine captain or governor; Giuliano de' Ricci the archbishop; both of them men of stern, determined, and implacable natures, and the city was pining from want. In this state, and probably fearful of a siege, Guccio issued a hard command "which for him," says the historian, "was extreme cruelty and for others tears."

All the women, and their young and innocent children without distinction, were sternly driven from the town and their own homes! "This unjust command was obeyed by the wretched victims, whose bitter cries drew tears of pity even from the depths of the earth! Alas what a sight to behold these poor defenceless women and their nurslings thus cast forth: some with an infant on each arm and on the back behind; other little creatures clinging to their mothers' skirts, naked and barefoot; and thus they hastened along tripping and weeping with the pain of their tender feet, and crying out with streaming eyes and uplifted faces, 'Where are we going to mother?' and making all beholders weep to hear their sobbing voice and infantile questions, while the wretched women answered, 'We are going where our own evil fortune and the cruelty of perverse men are sending us. O earth! Why art thou so hard-hearted as to sustain a life which compared to death is sharpness? O profound abyss send forth thy messengers and let them drag us to thy dark recesses, for thy bowels are sweeter than honey when placed beside the bitterness of man! From some of us they have torn our husbands, from some their brothers, from others fathers; and now they cast us out desolate among strange contending people, and we know not where to go! O God provide for thy creatures and punish us according to our sins, proportion the punishment to the crime, and vouchsafe that support which will give us patience to bear this unmitigated woe.'" Uttering such lamentations they wandered towards Genoa but finally spread in all direc-

tions, and settled particularly about Porto Venere and Pontremoli *.

The archbishop also had his share of this and other cruelties of a similar nature: the times made people hard, but it becomes a priest's duty to try and soften them rather than ride by night, as this prelate is described in the memoirs of his own family, on a powerful war-horse armed cap-a-piè, patrolling the streets to watch over the public tranquillity: and if any wretch came under his suspicion in these nocturnal rounds a waxen taper was instantly lighted and death and confiscation of property, or else exile, submitted to his choice before it had finished burning †.

But the soldiers outdid even the priests. Baldaccio d'Anghiari was one of those favourite generals of the Florentines that rendered war more terrible by his natural or acquired ferocity. "He called homicide boldness and resolution: the want of audacity he described as fearfulness at alarming and doubtful things: fidelity was in his mind to be always subservient to the cause he advocated; and sheer brutality was designated as virtuous audacity. By such maxims he was led, and led others after him with wonderful fortune to the most perilous achievements, and he often put to death the enemies of Florence with his own hand, leaving others to linger away a life which he had made worse than death itself." This man, thus described by a cotemporary, took Collegioli and in a sally that he made from that place captured amongst a crowd of prisoners, one named Guasparri da Lucignano who in person exactly resembled himself; it gave rise to a strange notion which he hastened to realise thus. Next morning Guasparri was attired in Baldaccio's garments while his men were ordered to give the Milanese war cry "*Duca*," "*Duca*;" as if in open mutiny, and follow it up by murdering the prisoner whose bloody and disfigured corpse was thrown from a tower into the ditch below.

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. xlvii.

† Ricordanze di Casa Ricci, p. 229, tom. xiv., Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani.

The remaining prisoners were then set free and the body shown to them as Baldaccio's against whom the troops affected to have mutinied: they were ordered to disperse without delay and spread the news of this wicked man's death through the country telling how the mutineers held the castle in the duke's name and waited for assistance. The story soon got abroad and the Pisans in multitudes, armed and unarmed, crowded to see the joyful spectacle, when suddenly the true Baldaccio appeared with his troops, surrounded them and sent them all prisoners to Florence *. Such atrocities committed, not only without remorse, or necessity, but as it would seem for mere military pastime gave the wars of this epoch a character of barbarous vindictiveness and horror that was calculated to lay a heavy load on the consciences of their authors; and if Cosimo de' Medici were really the fomenter of the Lucchese war, all his good acts and good qualities were but a sorry exchange for the mass of human suffering that his ambition inflicted and entailed upon his country. That he could have prevented it there is no doubt had he only seconded Niccolò da Uzzano; that he on the contrary strongly advocated and supported it is equally certain; and that it was unjust and void of political necessity can scarcely be questioned. Wherefore, putting aside all minor accusations, he must stand convicted of advocating and fostering an unjust and unnecessary war, waged with unusual horror, atrocious in its character, and destructive in its consequences.

The Venetians from their incipient discontent at Carmagnola's conduct after the victory of Maccalao, had become deeply suspicious of his fidelity since the naval action near Cremona, and this was further strengthened by his conduct at Cremona itself. His own troops had scaled the walls and taken a gate of that city, where they defended themselves for two whole days, vainly expecting assistance from Carmagnola who was near at hand; at length exhausted with fatigue A.D. 1432.

* Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. xlviii.

they could hold out no longer and were all cut to pieces! He afterwards allowed Piccinino to capture two fortified towns successively, under his very eyes and without an effort to save them; so that whether treacherous or not Venice had good cause for doubt and dissatisfaction *. Carmagnola's military movements are said to have been always slow and well considered; nor was he in the habit of permitting inclination to overcome reason; but the Venetian commissaries attached to his army never ceased to urge him on with all the confidence of ignorance: he, who was beyond measure proud and never restrained his tongue, answered them in the manner of Hawkwood to Andrea Vettori. "Go and prepare your broad cloths and "leave me to command the army." "Foolish people," said Carmagnola, "are you going to teach one that was born in battles "and nourished in blood? Go, mount your senseless horses "and visit the Caspian, then talk to me of its wonders, and in "such things I will place implicit faith; but be now content to "trust my experience, for I am not less expert on land than you "are at sea. You Venetians are rich in enterprise and prosperity, and if you deem me faithless, why then deprive me of office and I will seek my own fortune." The Venetians were both nettled and alarmed at this reproof, particularly at the hint of seeking his own fortune which indicated an intention of returning to the duke, or what would have been equally bad, attaching himself to the emperor who was already in Italy.

At what time they first began to entertain the idea of putting him to death does not appear, but Cavalcanti asserts that it was continually in debate and the secret closely kept for eight months by an assembly of two hundred senators without a suspicion getting abroad, or a word being divulged on the subject. Finally his fate was decreed and in a manner congenial to the time and country: for having been summoned to Venice on pretext of giving his opinion about negotiating a peace, and receiving

* Poggio, Lib. vi., p. 195.

marked honours at every stage of his journey, he finally arrived to end it in prison, torture, and in death. Carmagnola was decapitated before the palace of Saint Mark on the eleventh of May 1432, and his mouth being gagged at the time, a very natural suspicion arose that he could and would have told more than those dark rulers wished the world to hear. The Venetians as we have said had much to complain of, and as they could make but little of him themselves, were resolved that no enemy should have the benefit of his talents; but some strong proofs of his infidelity must have influenced that wary government (and their proofs it is said were sufficient) before they took the resolution of depriving themselves at so critical a moment of one of the ablest generals of the age if they had the slightest doubt of his guilt; and he certainly seems to have acted in so equivocal a manner as would have made him amenable to any modern court-martial with little chance of absolution *.

Carmagnola's death was satisfactory to Philip: it relieved him at once from a skilful enemy and an injured friend; from that moment he would listen to no overtures of peace and broke off the negotiations then proceeding at Ferrara. The emperor Sigismund who for a long time had been exclusively occupied in quelling the Hussites of Bohemia and had succeeded in restoring a semblance of peace to that country, resolved to seize this opportunity for assuming the imperial crown. In the autumn of 1431, he had already arrived and was crowned at Milan as king of Italy but without seeing Philip who in fear of the plague had retired to Bigrasso. While at Lucca in the spring of 1432, he vainly tried to establish peace between that city and Florence and a correspondence by his desire was begun but ended in nothing, the best comment on it being an incursion of the Florentines up to the very walls of Lucca, unmindful of the imperial presence; also the occupation of Ponsacco on the Cas-

* Ammirato, Stor. Fior., Lib. xx., p. 1080.—Poggio, Lib. vi., pp. 192, 195, 196, 197.—Muratori, Annali, Anno 1432.—Cavalcanti, Lib. vii., cap. xlix.

cina river in Val d' Elsa, to stop his further progress towards Siena or Rome. While Micheletto was before Lucca in this incursion, a young Hungarian knight issued from the town on pretence of speaking to him, but with the faithlessness then attributed to that nation attempted the Italian's life and was instantly laid dead by his sword *. This augmented Sigismund's anger but his force was too small to cope with Florence who kept him confined to Lucca until it suited the ascendant faction to release him. Both Venetians and Florentines now wanted peace; negotiations were talked of, and the latter in expectation of its speedy accomplishment determined to employ the interval in punishing Siena for her hostility. That devoted state was accordingly ravaged with a cruelty so great that even the wild leaders of the Florentine army, touched with unwonted pity, at last restrained their followers! "Better," exclaims Cavalcanti, "to be silent than write down such things as were never before seen in common usage."

Hitherto Sigismund had been arrested in his journey, but it was now deemed expedient to give the pope his share of the imperial presence, in revenge as some say, for his refusing under [redacted]orbitant price to prevent that monarch's passage into Tuscany. But according to Tinucci both this act and the ravaging of Siena were done by Cosimo's influence at the instigation of Averardo de' Medici, because Pope Eugenius was a personal enemy of the former; and thus the unutterable devastation of Siena, if Tinucci can be trusted, may by Averardo's own acknowledgment to him be brought home to his and Cosimo's hands †.

While Sigismund remained at Siena his Hungarians joined in the Senese inroads with congenial barbarity: a prisoner was taken by them and sent back with both hands chopped off to the Florentine camp; Arrigo Squarcialupi determining to revenge this; began a negotiation to surrender the important

* Cavalcanti, Lib. viii., cap. ii.

† Neri Capponi, Comment., tom. xviii., P. Rer. Ital. Scr., p. 1178.—Confessione di Ser Niccolo Tinucci, MS.

fortress of La Castellina in the province of Chianti, and a day was fixed for the event. The Hungarians being punctual, found the gate open, and were allowed to enter in what was deemed sufficient numbers: Arrigo then dropped the portcullis and with Baldaccio's aid killed all that resisted and made the remainder prisoners: the gate was now reopened and a bench being placed outside, every man was compelled to lay his arm upon it and thus each hand was cut off in succession, the Hungarians being tauntingly ordered to carry the severed members back to their comrades and share them out by number and lot to show how the riches of Italy were measured. For this Squarcialupo, who was a noble, received the high reward of being allowed to enter the ranks of the people without changing name or arms *.

The emperor remained several months at Siena and, apparently with augmented force, waged war against the Florentines: the latter now saw their error in allowing him to cross the Cascina; they had thus reënforced Siena and were themselves deficient in disposable troops to cope single-handed with both. By Neri Capponi's advice a conjunction with the papal army under Fortebraccio was resolved upon and he was charged to effect it: but Micheletto, with his term of service nearly expired, remained still unpaid and the other commanders would not move until he was satisfied; it was a common cause; nor did its settlement much hasten operations, yet a time and place of rendezvous with the pope's forces were named but similar difficulties occurred there: Fortebraccio also demanded his arrears which not being forthcoming he was conciliated with the high and important office of gonfalonier of the church: in such delays the season wasted and the troops retired to winter quarters; the Venetians too had been totally defeated by Piccinino in the Valteline with immense

* Cavalcanti, Lib. viii., cap. v.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1086.

loss and were thus beaten into a similar disposition for the termination of hostilities *.

Success and failure were nearly balanced and much negotiation went on, fruitlessly with Siena and the emperor, but with better prospects in Lombardy where after long discussions Ferrara once more became the scene of general pacification.

Through the efforts of Niccolo Marquis of Este and Lodovico of Salluzzo, a treaty was signed in April 1433 between the league and Milan in which it was stipulated that a general restitution of conquests should take place and everything revert to its state before the war: Venice alone, as was her wont, contrived to benefit herself; and while Visconte restored all his acquisitions from her, she was allowed to retain all that she had conquered from him †.

A.D. 1433.

A growing desire for peace had been for some time prevalent in Florence: the national force was diminished, the citizens' purses emptied, no solid good had accrued, and considerable reputation was lost; Lucca, instead of subjection, had recovered her liberty, and much of the Florentine dominion had been wrested from the commonwealth; commerce had been checked, agriculture injured, and general suffering inflicted on the people. The popular rage for war therefore began to lull and with it the influence of Cosimo's faction. Niccolò da Uzzàno seizing this crisis, vehemently urged the necessity of peace and exerted all his influence to obtain it: this was his last act, and he died in the autumn of 1432. The Medician party apprehensive of public inconstancy and the virulence of an adverse faction unchained by Uzzàno's death and now in the ascendant, determined not to risk their popularity by still upholding war, therefore joined with the Uzzaneschi in concluding a treaty to

* Neri Capponi, Commentarj, Rer. Scri. Ital., tom. xviii., p. 1178. — Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1084.—Poggio, Lib. vii., p. 202.

† Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1086.

which Siena soon after became a party and the road to Rome was thus opened for Sigismund.

He had been about a twelvemonth in Siena to the infinite damage and discomfort of the people, during which time being assisted by that republic he smoothed all difficulties with Pope Eugenius about his coronation and at the peace proceeded to Rome where it took place on the thirty-first of May 1433, after his having exercised all the imperial functions as king of the Romans for one-and-twenty years *. Sigismund soon returned by way of Romagna first to the council at Basle and then into Germany, as well satisfied to escape from the fierce broils and cunning intrigues of the Italians as they were to get rid of the imperial presence, ever a fertile source of trouble in Italy †.

The Florentines immediately nominated a board of five citizens to re-arrange the affairs of Pisa and investigate the cause of the late disorders; who finding that the towns of Caprona, Calci, Marti, Rasignano, Orciatico, and Donoratico, had wantonly revolted, and not through any apprehensions of the enemy dismantled them with several others in Val d'Arbra and the territory of Arezzo ‡. Thus after three destructive years of incessant war, commenced in injustice through the ambition of faction; after a fearful diminution of human life and joy and comfort; after a painful augmentation of misery and calamity; of wretchedness, poverty, and want; of national weakness and public debt; of civil discord, ambition, and new inroads on private and native liberty; was this vain and unjust contest terminated, without an approach to its original ostensible object, the subjugation of Lucca §.

* Malavolti, Stor. di Siena, Lib. ii°, Parte iii^a, from folio 24 to 27.—Bruto, Storia di Firen., Lib. i., p. 75.—Muratori Annali, Anno 1433.—Corio, Parte v^a, folio 330.—Cavalcanti, Lib. viii., cap. vi.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1086.

† Neri Capponi, tom. xviii., p. 1179.—Corio, Parte v^a, folio 330.

‡ Neri Capponi, Commentar., Rer. Scrip. Ital., tom. xviii., p. 1180.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1057.

§ So determined were the Lucchese, that in their scarcity of everything, but especially of wood, they drew lots to see whose houses should be pulled

True to their inherent character, or perhaps to the nature of those institutions that formed it, the Florentines were no sooner free from external war than internal commotion gathered double force; and now relieved from the pressure of Uzzano's sagacity it flared up in all the fury of its ancient democratic character.

That sage and moderate statesman had foreseen and foretold the exaltation of the Medici: he perceived its beginning in Giovanni, and its more dangerous progress in Cosimo, Lorenzo, and Averardo; and he felt that after half a century's duration the ruin of Albizzi's faction was at hand. Nevertheless, between the cares of war, the danger and uncertainty of revolution, and the bad opinion and want of confidence, dashed perhaps with some jealousy of Rinaldo he never would consent to proceed against Cosimo by any extraordinary means, and during his life no such measure was attempted. When his friend Niccolo Barbadoro one day came to urge his checking the rapid progress of Cosimo, this venerable statesman was sitting thoughtfully in his study, his cheek resting on his hand, and Barbadori thus addressed him. "I know that thou "art full of the very matter that brings me here: now leave "all else and advise the remedy for that evil which is day by "day announced to thee lest it should ultimately fall upon thine "own head. Unless thou persuadest me otherwise I will "wait until I am drawn for gonfalonier of justice which now "cannot be long; I will then call a parliament and remove "from the people this man who sits amongst them as though "he were one of the immortal gods amongst the Gentiles. I "mean Cosimo. Remove him, the others will soon follow, and "we shall stand secure in their absence; we shall remain as "we ever have been wont at the head of the government and "still be the dispensers of its dignities. What I have now said

down to supply it, and this was cheerfully acquiesced in. Thus a sufficiency was furnished daily.—(Vide *Bruto, Storia di Firenze*, Lib. i., p. 75.)

" to thee I have said to none, nor will I mention it except by
" thy dictation; for surely thou art ever of that mind which
" most conduces to the public good."

" Niccolo, Niccolo Barbadoro," exclaimed Uzzàno, " would
" to God that thou might be reasonably named Niccolo '*Barba,*
" *argenta,*' because it would indicate an old experienced man
" in whom might be found a sound judgment and excelling
" prudence; for with this prudence, O Niccolo! we forget not
" past times, are acquainted with the present, and provide for
" the future. If thou hadst known these things thou wouldst
" not have uttered what thou hast; but as thou dost not know
" thyself it is reasonable that thou knowest not others: in this
" however there is no marvel, for self-knowledge is not amongst
" the least of heaven's gifts. Now understand, Niccolo; that
" I have at divers times debated this matter with myself, and
" replied for our antagonists, and then rejoindered for our-
" selves; and finally concluded that it is better to be still
" than to stir up so perilous a contention for the commonwealth
" as thy parliament would produce. None of us agree toge-
" ther in wishes or intentions; nay, we are opposed to each
" other in everything and more from nature than accident:
" knowest thou not that there never yet was any exhibition of
" friendship without concealed danger between the popular-
" ised nobles and the Pòpolani Grassi? Messer Maso degli
" Albizzi especially was ever an obstacle: consider that in
" 1414, only to drive us from power and destroy our popularity
" he made peace with King Ladislaus, and dost thou imagine
" the son to be different from the father? In nothing does he
" vary except in being more morose and proud; he is incon-
" stant where his father was constant and friendly to those
" who sought his friendship: but this man has no more affec-
" tion for friend than foe; he wears the same countenance for
" both and despises all. Dost thou believe that when he
" seized his father's mules it was from motives of impartial

" justice or the vain-glorious pomp of pride?* Believe me it " was only some smoke from the fire of hypocrisy and pride, " and not justice that made him do it. Thou mayest judge of " his mutability and inconsistency by his public conduct. Thou " sawest him one of our principal leaders in San Stefano, and " in a moment after he joined Averardo in being one of the " most active promoters of the Lucchese war! And merely to " become one of the TEN, did he not directly oppose us and " throw himself on the side of the Medici? Why we can " expect no more firmness or constancy from him than from " a swallow in the air. Think not O Niccolo, that Rinaldo " seeks these changes in the state so much for the downfall of " Cosimo as our ruin and his own exaltation, which exaltation " cannot be achieved but by our fall. He disdains to concur " in opinion with any citizen, but expects that every citizen " will bow to *him*. He wants his will to be received as law by " the people, and that of others to be written in ashes for cour- " tesy, and then exposed to the winds. What hope can we " have in a man who seeks the ruin of those that exalted him, " and that only to make his way to political power? He either " wants to deceive us or is a thankless ingrate to his party. " Believe it Niccolo he shall not deceive me; nor do thou " either, suffer thyself to be deceived: the man who seeks to " provoke so dangerous a change in the state will be abandoned " by all, and all will seek his ruin; and if thou livest remem- " ber me as a true prophet. I well believe; such is man's " inconstancy, and so powerful Rinaldo's eloquence and impor-

* When Podestà of Prato he had *ex-officio* arrested a carrier for money due to a citizen of Florence who had sold him two mules, and on questioning the man while in prison, was answered: that if his own creditors paid him he could pay all, but he never expected justice. Rinaldo said he should have justice, though it might be from his (Rinaldo's) own father. The man replied, "Your father then *does* owe me for two mules, the very sum for which I am now in prison." On which Rinaldo said to his officers, "Go, and seize my father's mules." The order was obeyed, the mules seized and sold, the debt paid, and the carrier liberated.—(Vide *Cavalcanti*, vol. ii., Appendice, § 79.)

" tunity; that some one will be found to carry out his intent;
" which in a brief period will recoil on himself, disturb the
" citizens, and ruin the republic. Cosimo is too useful to the
" people, especially in the expenses of war; and what crime or
" what cause can be alleged against this man to keep the peo-
" ple quiet when he falls? Certes he hath no fault that needs
" so perilous a step. Be thou assured, O Niccolo, that this is
" a game of hazard stirred up by evil-minded men; I mean
" Cosimo's exile; which I see will soon take place: he will
" leave you, a good and well-disposed citizen, and will return
" the contrary; for he will be forced by circumstances and by
" the iniquity of his exile to change his habits and his nature,
" and he will outstep every honest mode of political life. And
" this not so much from himself as from the prompting of bad
" men; for he will go into exile free and unshackled, and come
" back under a burden of obligations to each of his rabid fac-
" tion: in return for the benefit of his restoration he will be
" compelled by necessity to promise or act so as to carry their
" iniquitous projects into execution. And for no other reason
" did Messer Maso promulgate the law that excluded bank-
" rupts from public employment but because they were not
" free agents, but the very slaves of their creditors. Thus
" will the commonwealth remain in the hands of the wicked!
" Believe me Messer Niccolo, that were it not for the prompt-
" ing of Averardo, this man would sooner be accepted by us
" than loved by them; because we must believe that he retains
" the customs of his father which thou knowest to have been,
" more than any other citizen's immaculate. But my advice
" and opinion is that thou and our other friends remain quiet
" spectators and we shall have both sides of the game: above
" all let us not be less observant of our partisans' doings than
" of those that consider us their enemies; and let who will,
" gain, we shall from the mere balance of parties resume our

"power; but whoever first begins will cause his own and his "country's ruin"*.

This discourse stopped all violence while Uzzàno lived; but no sooner was he gone than Rinaldo occupied his place, rallied his adherents under the name of *Rinaldeschi*, and determined on Cosimo's destruction: he compared past with existing times: in those he saw Piero his great uncle overborne by a Medici and ultimately beheaded. In these he saw another and a stronger Medici, more powerful in wealth and intellect, rising like a monster on the broad wave of popularity and advancing to devour him, and he knew not how to defend himself. He saw him supported by the unscrupulous audacity of Averardo and the deep sagacity of Pucci. The latter was a plebeian of the minor arts, but so wise in counsel and prudent in action, and so necessary to Cosimo that partly for this, and partly as a mockery of that faction by their antagonists on account of his low origin, they were insultingly called "*Puccini*" and not "*Cosimeschi*." Averardo, bold, confident, overbearing, and prompt of tongue and hand, carried great authority, and Rinaldo left no means untried to alarm the minds of the citizens and prejudice them against the man whom he insisted was aiming at the destruction of public liberty †.

The first election of magistrates threw all Florence into agitation; votes were eagerly counted and extreme excitement prevailed: fear, hope, doubt, and suspicion were strongly marked on the public mind and each new drawing renewed the scene. So high was the excitement that a bevy of young men had actually plotted together to seize the election purses, in their periodical passage from Santa Croce to the Palace, and give them all to the flames, and this was only avoided by a change in the hour, and persons who carried them. Parties were still vibrating, and the measures of

* Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. vii., cap. viii., ix. † Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1033.

one were negatived by the other as a matter of course from mere spirit of faction, for they would rather have seen the country fall than saved by their antagonists: nothing that came before any magistracy from the Seignory downwards, just or unjust, useful or injurious, but was made a subject of rivalry and party strife; and as even the very lowest magistracies, all being judicial courts, were drawn by lot from the grand purse of the "*Squittino*;" faction penetrated everywhere and in its most malignant form; and thus was the republic governed!

Rinaldo although one of the most able and eloquent of the citizens was so unsteady and disdainful that neither party could divine his real objects or say to which of them he belonged: now acting with the Medici, now with the Uzzaneschi, then back again to the former, he was in a constant state of alternacy; and as time, says Cavalcanti, is measured by points and hours, so were the turns and doubles of Rinaldo degli Albizzi. Many asserted that he himself knew not his own sentiments, but the more sagacious averred that this strange instability was produced by his ambition to be the sole party leader and chief of the Florentines: he wanted a great following: was too proud to follow, and his father's reputation made him arrogant and ambitious, but not wise. Wrapped in that statesman's mantle Rinaldo vainly imagined he could bear the weight and move as he did, but was soon smothered in its folds; for Maso if his eulogists speak truth was no common man; he is said to have possessed above all others the power of making his enemies acknowledge their errors; he excelled in the art of government, and with far less pecuniary means than either Giovanni or Cosimo, preserved the friendship of the nobles while he acquired the affection of the people. But Rinaldo could not or would not understand these things; nor was he capable of comprehending how much a popular and conciliatory manner creates personal attachment, promotes good government and even reconciles many a discontented mind to bad*.

* Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xx., p. 1088.—Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. ii.

During these disjointed times ancient regulations were so neglected that the names of all forthcoming magistrates were previously known, even from year to year; all were predicted by a certain sightless man called Benedetto Ceco who by some party-juggling became the prophetic instrument of political intrigue and was believed, not because things were so managed in secret, but superstitiously, and because "*the blind man said so!*" Nor was Rinaldo, as far as his economy would allow, a bit more scrupulous than the Medici in clearing off arrears of taxation amongst his supporters, or making new friends of ancient enemies to strengthen his political influence. Amongst the latter was Bernardo Guadagni grandson to that Migliore who, once an enemy of the Albizzi, had suddenly changed to their side, and hated the Medici faction because his grandfather's house was burned by the Ciompi in 1378*. On this foundation Rinaldo built, and knowing that Bernardo would be gonfalonier of justice at the next drawing if he were not "*a specchio*," soon removed that obstacle by paying his arrears and had no difficulty in persuading him to aid in Cosimo's downfall. His mind was excited by a vivid picture of Cosimo's insidious course towards supreme power and the percolation of his riches through every channel and crevice that led to it, from the humblest citizen to the conductors of armies, and even the republic itself; all were indebted to his bounty and his will was law in Florence: the generals of her forces were appointed or dismissed at his command; Niccolo Tolentino wished for his discharge and through Cosimo it was granted; he ultimately engaged with Visconte and again at Cosimo's nod returned to Florence: Micheletto was by him or through his influence elected; all bowed to his pleasure: he in fact held

* Migliore Guadagni's house, though burned by the populace in Salvestro de' Medici's riots, was supposed to have been destroyed by one of his own kinsmen, of the Cavoni family which had been admonished while Migliore was one of the Captains of Party, and thence he was supposed by the Cavoni to have consented to it; the actual incendiary being his own son-in-law!—(Vide *Ammirato*, Lib. xiv., p. 719.)

the Florentine sceptre, as yet concealed by his civic mantle, but had only to uncover it for the accomplishment of his will.

"Seize then the standard of justice," exclaimed Rinaldo to Guadigni, "for whosoever upholds *that* the gods give strength to." The answer was short, prompt, and decided. "Where "action is necessary few words are best: it is enough for thee "O Rinaldo, that I will do my utmost for the commonwealth: "be thou prepared with armed adherents *without;* and I will "bring my colleagues to the point *within*." He assumed office on the first of September 1433, and amongst the eight priors only Bartolomeo Spini and Jacopo Berlingheri were in Cosimo's interest. Rinaldo made every military preparation without alarming the citizens, while Guadagni sounded those in the palace and initiated all whom he could trust, wherefore sure of an internal majority as well as external aid, he on the seventh day of his office cited Cosimo before the Seignory and committed him to prison*.

In a small room called the "*Alberghettino*" or "*Barbaria*" the highest in the palace tower, was this powerful citizen suddenly immured without any pointed charge or form of accusation by the power of the Seignory alone, and not in the naked strength and majesty of law, but under the disguise of armed conspiracy which trembled as it worked!

"I was written to in Mugello" says Cosimo, "where I had been staying for several months to escape from party contests, that I should return; and accordingly on the fourth I did return; on the fifth a council of eight citizens was ordered, the Seignory declaring that they wished to discuss every measure with their advice, and they were Messer Giovanni Guicciardini, &c., Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi, and I Cosimo. And though a report spread through the city that some change was preparing, still having from them what I had, and deeming

* Neri di Gino Capponi, Com. Rer. Scrip. Ital., tom. xviii., p. 1180.—Gio. Monaldi, Ricord., p. 112.—Gio. Cambi, Stor., p. 183.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1088.—Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. ix., capi. iv., v., vi.

them to be friends, I did not believe the rumour. It followed that on the morning of the seventh of September under colour of holding the said council they sent for me, and when I arrived at the palace I found there the greater part of my colleagues; after a considerable time and while standing in conversation I was commanded on the Seignory's part to proceed up stairs and by the captain of the guard was placed in a room called the "*Barbaria*," and was locked in there; but the whole town on hearing it rose in tumult"*.

Much unusual parade and public notice were adopted on this occasion in sending for Cosimo, managed as was supposed by his friends in order to warn and give him time for his escape; and either Piero Ginori or Piero Guicciardini implored him with strong remonstrances not to trust himself at the palace for he was going to his destruction†. All were anxious they said, even from self-interest to save him, for the safety of many depended on his: Cosimo changed colour, but replied; "Piero, "Piero, thy intentions are surely good, but I feel too jealous "of the republic's greatness to disobey; besides I do not see "that I have anything to apprehend, not having committed "any crime: I have also written to Giovanni di Matteo (dello "Scelto) and he has bidden me trust to him and fear no-"thing." Thus saying he proceeded. The news of his arrest ran wildly through Florence; the astonished citizens were unable to move; Rinaldo appeared in arms with his followers advancing towards the palace and seconded by the Peruzzi, Gianfiglazzi, and all the Uzzaneschi faction: two days passed before Guadagni and the priors ordered that the great bell should be tolled for a general parliament; this drew the whole population round the palace; its gates were thrown open; the Seignory and Colleges with the standard and Gonfalonier of Justice occupied the Ringhiera to the sound of silver

* Ricordi di Cosimo, Vide Fabroni, Life of Cosimo, Appendix.
† Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. vii.

trumpets and other instruments. Silence was commanded. Ser Filippo Peruzzi Secretary of the Reformations then came forward and with sonorous voice demanded, "O people of "Florence, believe ye that in this assembly there are now "present two-thirds of your civic population?" "Yea certes "we are two-thirds and more," was the reply. He then asked, "Are ye willing that a Balià should be nominated for the pre- "sent reformation of your community and for the public good?" At this the voices rose so loud and high and long that the air trembled and no demand was made to which the people did not answer "Yea." Then Ser Filippo unfolded a roll of parchment on which the names of the proposed members of the Balià were inscribed, and read them consecutively to the number of two hundred, all of whom were adopted by the public voice. After this the Seignory and Colleges reëntered the palace with the same state and order as before*.

Such was the formality of assembling a Florentine parliament for conferring extraordinary powers by the sovereign people to be used without any control; it was doubtless an act of pure and legitimate sovereignty by a general assembly of the nation; but the nut was large and the kernel small, and a packed minority at the foot of the Ringhiera generally disposed of the commonwealth, while the distant masses shouted at every word and then imagined themselves as free as water over a precipice!

Like all Baliàs this had supreme, irresponsible, dictatorial power while it lasted; save any meddling with the catasto or destroying of the election purses; but its authority must not be confounded with that of the TEN, which though unlimited in its functions as regarded war, had no other rule†. This Balià was ordered to assemble on the following morning, and thus the scene closed immediately round and within the palace, but not

* Neri Capponi, tom. xviii., p. 1180.—Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. viii.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1089.

† Ibid.

in Florence and still less so in the suburbs where the poor resided: there as we are told, like Dante's "*Segrete Cose*," cries lamentations, beating of hands and breasts, prayers and vows, were heard on every side for Cosimo's liberty, and his escape from the violent death that all believed now threatened him*. Nor was it in Florence alone that such feelings showed themselves: amongst the Mugello hills and in its remotest vales a powerful commotion was manifested, which even extended to Venice and Ferrara, and the captain-general Niccolo Tolentino advanced as far as Lastra to succour his friend with the whole military force of the republic, but was unwisely persuaded to retire by the prisoner's kinsmen lest Cosimo's safety should be jeopardied; "A thing well meant," observes the sagacious Medici himself; "but it was not good counsel; for if he had "advanced I was free and those who had caused this, ruined"†. Venice sent her ambassadors, whose influence did much, to save him; and Nicholas of Este ordered the Captain of the People who was his subject to deliver him if possible. The affection for this man amongst the lower classes, whatever might have been its source or means of acquirement, was strong, universal, and

* "Quivi sospiri, pianti, ed alti guai
Risonavan per l'aer senza stelle,
Perch'io nel cominciar ne lagrimai.
Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,
Parole di dolore, accenti d' ira,
Voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle,
Facevano un tumulto, il qual s' aggira
Sempre in quell' aria senza tempo tinta,
Come la rena, quando 'l turbo spira."—(*Inferno*, Canto iii.)

Sobs, lamentations, and loud-sounding cries
Resounded through that murky starless air,
So that at first in pity I did weep.
Tongues of all nations, horrible discourse,
Wailings of torture, accents of deep ire,
Shrieks, hoarse, and shrill, and beat of hands withal,
Made one wild tumult, which for ever sweeps
Through that eternally-thick-tinted air,
Like eddying sand-drifts when the whirlwind blows.

† Ricordi di Cosimo, Vide Fabroni, Appendix.

the chief cause of his persecution: the higher-classes of his party saw their personal safety endangered by his fall; the lower classes had no such fear; but they would miss his private bounty and lose their champion in the public councils. While Cosimo trembled in the palace-tower above, his fate was the subject of dark and earnest discussion in the palace-hall below; not whether he should live or die, for the latter without specific charge or form of trial seems to have been settled from the first; but only the time and manner of his death. Frederic Malavolti the grandson of Orlando an illustrious Guelphic exile from Siena, had him in custody, and being questioned by Mariotto Baldovinetti as to how Cosimo was employed and what he thought of his predicament; replied, "He is full of "anxiety and refuses food; saying, 'It is not his usual hour,' "'He is not hungry,' and so forth." Upon which Mariotto replied, "Or rather he fears being poisoned, the miscreant!" At this moment Giovanni dello Scelto, the man on whose friendship Cosimo most relied, entered and said, "It is for him "to consider whether he will eat or no, for it is he that finds "the meat and we the broth"*. Mariotto then addressing Malavolti said "O Federigo, as I want *thee* to be the man "that will terminate our danger and his suspicions, thou art "now informed that the whole government will adore thee with "clasped hands, and none of thy wishes shall pass ungratified "if thou wilt only administer to Cosimo a poisoned beverage "and thus relieve us from danger and him from any further "apprehension." To this atrocious proposition Malavolti indignantly answered, "Signior—No difference exists between "the gentleman and the peasant at their birth or their death; "but only in the conduct of their life: the gentleman abhors "shame, which the peasant cannot do because he is unconscious "of the feeling: the virtues of my forefathers, of whom I

* "Egli metterà la carne, e noi il Brodo." A proverbial expression, to signify that the cost will be his who finds the meat, not for them who only find the water, which costs nothing.

" inherit, give me gentility and forbid my undertaking so " wicked, so shameful a work; and in order to preserve an " inheritance so ancient I will not be the instrument of this " most unjust proceeding; but I will for the sake of your " honour keep so shameful a demand a profound secret." Two of the seignors then said. " Federigo we enjoin thee to be " silent about our intentions and blind to our actions; but let " us enter Cosimo's chamber by night when he sleeps, and there " we will strangle him; we will then throw his body from the " tower, and tying a broken rope to the balcony make the people " believe that he fell in the act of escaping, and thus we shall " remain in safety." This too was sternly refused by Malavolti, who immediately returning to Cosimo said in a cheerful voice, " O Cosimo, how is it that during all the time thou hast been " here thou never hast demanded food? Certes I fear that " thou believest I may be thy executioner and give thee poison; " wherefore I must tell thee that I am of the Malavolti, and for " no sum were it ever so great, would I lose that gentle name; " nor could I lose it except by consenting to treachery and other " such abominations, of which none would be half so infamous as " allowing thee to be poisoned while under my protection. Thou " shalt eat, and trust to me; for as the son of a true knight, and " grandson of Orlando Malavolti, I promise that thy only food " shall be what mine own hands have prepared." Cosimo resumed courage, gazed a while in Malavolti's face, then bursting into tears embraced and kissed him, exclaiming " May God " give you grace for me "*. A few days after this, some friends

* If Pignotti had seen all Cavalcanti's history, instead of chap. xi., lib. ix., alone (which was copied into various MS. collections as an insulated fragment of anonymous biography), he would hardly have cast a doubt on the little story of poisoning it contains. Cavalcanti is evidently not a party writer, and Cosimo's own fears showed the *probability* of the act, for Cosimo must have known his men. It is strange that a cotemporary MS. history of so interesting a period, of which many copies are no doubt in the public and private libraries of Florence, and one of which the author bought at a common book-stall, in 1835, should have escaped the researches of Pignotti

brought Malavolti a present of game half of which he presented to the Seignory remarking that he kept the remainder for the guest they had given him. There happened to be then present a certain boon companion of Guadagni's called Ferganaccio, who with the liberty of a buffoon invited himself to partake the banquet and being of a witty agreeable turn was welcomed by Malavolti. At dessert Cosimo significantly touched the latter's foot who immediately retired on pretence of business and the prisoner took this opportunity to send a message and a thousand florins by Ferganaccio to Bernardo Guadagni with the request of an interview; or according to others the money went next morning, but the interview took place and Cosimo's intended death was changed for exile. Such is Cavalcanti's story and it differs from others only in detail, the main fact remains; that Cosimo in conjunction with Venetian influence secured his life by bribing the chief magistrate of Florence; and this and more is confirmed by his own words. "Bernardo was offered money by two persons, that is the Captain of the Forces 500 florins, and the Director of the Hospital of Santa Maria Novella 500, which he had paid down; and Mariotto Baldovinotti, by Baccio, 800. I was taken from the palace on the night of the third of October and conducted out of the town through Porta San Gallo: they had little spirit; for if they had insisted on more money they might have had 10,000 florins and upwards to deliver me from danger"*.

Although rage and consternation pervaded Florence not a whisper broke forth from the citizens in outward demonstration; on the contrary a mournful silence reigned throughout: a few threatening voices might here and there be heard but

and Sismondi, and even the giant Muratori himself seems to have overlooked it. That Macchiavelli, however, drew largely from it is very evident, though he never mentions his authorities. Thus has this valuable and often eloquent writer remained dormant for four hundred years, until published by the public-spirited, and deserving editors of the "*Documenti di Storia Italiana*," in 1838 and 1839.

* Ricordi di Cosimo. (*Vide Appendix to Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo.*)

nothing general, for the alarm was deep not loud, and silence only broken by one individual who like the frantic prophet of Jerusalem traversed the streets crying out "Wo! wo!" This man was Piero di Francesco di Ser Gino, who unappalled by the fierce bearing of the Rinaldeschi ran shouting through Florence; "We are approaching our ruin! We are chang- "ing joy for sorrow! We are near the acknowledgment of "our sins! What justice is this? what promise of social in- "tercourse when good citizens are expelled, and the succour "of the humble is banished? When the nourishment of the "merchant, the milk of the poor, the shield of the nobles' "labour, is exiled as a guilty man for things he never thought "of; and by those too, whose abounding wickedness has never "failed!" Thus he continued rating the Uzzaneschi yet no man dared even to reprove him, much less to punish his audacity.

At the first meeting of the Balià the means of establishing a new order of public affairs was discussed and Cosimo's exile prolonged for ten years at Padua; Averardo was condemned to ten years' banishment at Naples without regret from any; his son Guilliano to Rome; and all the house of Medici, the descendants of Vieri excepted, were placed amongst the *great* and exiled; or excluded from public employment for ten years *. In the second sitting, the "*Otto della Guardia*," a board of eight citizens, was created for six months and their election given to the Seignory, but with authority so great and inquisitorial to defend the government from plots, that a violent opposition to the decree was made by Cosimo's friends, even in the Balià itself, until through sheer weariness and late at night it was ultimately allowed to pass †. In the third session the ancient custom, of two-thirds of the whole Balià being necessary to the passing of a bill, was annulled and a like portion of those actually present substituted. This probably arose

* Ricordj di Cosimo.—Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. xiii.
† Ibid., cap. xiv.

from the obstinate discussion of the former assembly when the Cosimeschi were found much stronger than was convenient and excluded the prospect of carrying any stringent measures against them; whereas in the smaller number lay greater safety, for more influence was expected.

Yet it was soon discovered that force alone could preserve the present faction, so strong was public feeling in behalf of Cosimo; wherefore, in the fourth meeting of the Balià, extraordinary and dictatorial power was conferred on the Captain of the People for three months. This was a decisive stroke, for that officer was always formidable; he was a stranger and almost necessarily devoted to the existing government of whatever faction, wherefore the Cosimeschi and poorer classes were terror-struck and "cowered like doves under the eagles' claws:" none dared to murmur against this; it was too late; the power was in actual existence that stopped all murmurs: but saith Cavalcanti, "Men shrugged their shoulders, covered with their hands the bathed eye and arched eyebrow, and showed their grief at Cosimo's banishment." Some indeed supposed that Averardo's exile rendered Cosimo's bearable and prevented tumult, and that his wickedness almost necessitated it because relationship included both guilty and innocent; and that as property was inherited by kinsmen of all characters so did the just inherit the punishment of the unjust: wherefore as good and evil are commonly balanced, so the joy at Averardo's misfortune partially neutralised the sorrow for Cosimo's." As a necessary precaution however, a guard of two hundred men was embodied for the palace and Niccolo Tolentino was commanded to retire from Lastra, an order that would have been unheeded had his march not been already arrested by the advice of the Medici *.

While Cosimo remained a close prisoner in the tower where he probably received much intelligence of what was passing,

* Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. xvii.

the redoubted Capitano del Popolo despatched an officer to his cell; the harsh noise of the bolts as one by one they were removed struck terror to the prisoner's soul, for so many days had elapsed since Guadagni's visit that he knew not what to think: his heart now sunk within him, nor was the messenger's ruthless countenance any relief to his feelings. Convinced that he was going to instant execution, the great the powerful high-reaching Cosimo; the popular idol, the bold sagacious and ambitious leader of faction; the unflinching advocate of war, and the feared of his opponents; this same Cosimo fainted suddenly away; we must not say like a woman, for they are generally examples of noble fortitude in the last moments of existence; but as a craven of the basest caste; and fell as if he were dead, upon the pavement! Even the stern messenger of justice was touched with pity and condescended to cheer him. His life was declared to be safe, but exile certain. Thus reassured Cosimo broke forth into strong and grateful expressions of feeling to the officer, promising not to forget either him or the Captain of the People should his fortune change.

Cosimo, who according to Varchi, (and he wrote for the first grand duke of that name) "with open and manifest virtues, and with secret and hidden vices, made himself the chief, and little less than prince of a republic, rather *not subject*, than *free*," was here at least no hypocrite either in fear or gratitude, but surely somewhat less than man *. And if he believed it true, that God and he were ever striving which could do each other most service, as was once most impiously remarked, he might in this trial either have put more trust in that protecting hand, or at least have borne with greater fortitude the prospect of appearing before so bountiful a master †. In the evening of the third of October after six-and-twenty days of confinement Cosimo de' Medici was brought before the Seignory: they had kept him so long

* Bened. Varchi, Della Storia Fiorentina, Lib. i°, p. 5.
† Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. ix., cap. xix.

imprisoned; first, to command a majority in the Balià with menaces of death if thwarted by his friends there; and secondly to cause a bankruptcy by neglect of his business; but against this he was amply protected by foreign lords and merchants who sent large sums to Venice on his account*. Being before his judges he was sternly commanded to begone to Padua and there remain for his full period of exile; but no specific charge seems to have been even then formally and publicly advanced against him, and he certainly had no trial. The Lucchese war, which he advocated and fostered, was the most tangible crime; but it was that of the whole nation as well as Cosimo's. Bruto asserts that amongst the "*other accusations*" the blame of that war singularly attached itself to Cosimo who was its principal instigator; but these other accusations are not on record, except in the complaints and general assertions of the opposite faction; wherefore Cosimo's banishment seems to have been decidedly cruel and unjust; against the will of the majority; and worse than useless as a measure of public safety †.

It is said that he delivered a valedictory address to the Seignory in which amongst other grateful expressions for the lenity of his sentence, he offered both purse and person to assist his country in any part of the world; he enumerated his services, asserted that he had never wronged any one, nor by his conduct caused a single place to revolt; that he had sustained the country's credit and even paid the army with his own private resources, and finally entreated for a guard to protect him from those who were waiting outside to murder him: this being granted he quietly retired to his own house, supped with his friends, and then rode forth an exile. Cosimo was escorted to the frontier by Francesco Soderini and Niccolo del Chiaro, members of the new magistracy of Eight, and proceeding by way of Pistoia and the Modenese Apennines, his whole journey is described more as that of a triumphant than a banished

* Ricordi di Cosimo de' Medici. † Bruto, Ist. Fior, Lib. i., p. 75.

man *. The road was thronged, the people poured down in streams from the hills to behold the illustrious exile and offer him their sympathy and assistance if he would only turn back and manfully dispute his sentence. "Aid thyself O Cosimo," was the cry. "Aid thyself and God will aid thee; and we "too will assist thee; we will pull thy enemies to pieces as a "good housewife does the flax on her distaff, strive for thyself, "for though ease is at first soft as feathers its effects are like "the quills of the porcupine." During this time thousands of rough hands were thrust forward to convince him of their sincerity. Cosimo gently refused their proffered service and continued his journey to Ferrara, where the Marquis of Este received him with princely honours, and on the eleventh of October he was safely lodged at Venice †. Here he tells us that he was welcomed by many noble gentlemen, and entertained less as an exile than ambassador: on the thirteenth he arrived at Padua and in the house of Jacopo Donato waited for more fortunate times and circumstances ‡. The expulsion of Cosimo was treated by the ascendant faction as a national triumph, the removal of a great public calamity, a service that required honours and rewards to those who achieved it; wherefore governments and privileges were showered on the victorious Seignory §. Rinaldo alone was sad; he wanted death, and Cosimo's escape was to him destruction; for a powerful foe wounded but not killed was implacable, and no vengeance so deadly as that of a restored exile.

It might have been deemed that the decided means taken to strengthen the new government would have sufficed to its end. The "Otto della Guardia," (though not described by Forti, if they be the same as the "*Otto*" noticed by Giannotti) could dispose of the life and property of any citizen by six

* Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. xxi., xxii. —Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1090.
† Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. xxii.
‡ Ricordi di Cosimo.—Caval. Stor., Lib. ix., p. 544, Note 1.
§ Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1090.

votes. The Capitano del Popolo was made fearfully powerful; ten citizens called "*Accoppiatori*," in conjunction with the Balia, were given the power of choosing any man from the purses as gonfalonier of justice, of depositing what names they pleased in the "*Borsellino*" as priors, and of causing a new scrutiny under their own influence; besides other strong measures of self-preservation but destructive of public liberty *.

The worst of such laws was that no political opponent attempted to abolish them on accession to power; they were generally useful to any ascendant faction and that was the only real liberty of the great citizens; for the public, as a public, was never considered, independent of party. But all this did not satisfy Rinaldo; he assembled his partisans and demonstrated to them that no security existed while Cosimo lived, especially as Puccio Pucci was still free; whereupon the latter was exiled for ten years to Aquila. The very means they had adopted to strengthen themselves he declared would in the hands of a Seignory favourable to Cosimo insure his return and bring destruction on their authors; wherefore he should either have been untouched or destroyed: "Believe me, believe me," exclaimed Albizzi, "he will remember the debt and repay you cent. per cent. in torture and bitter exile †. But there is one means of safety, an alliance with the nobles, who are still the most valorous of men." They had in fact been enemies of the Medici ever since Salvestro's day when he maimed their power and the Guelphic party together, and caused the subsequent fines and commotions by which they suffered so severely.

There were many irresolute spirits too amongst his own party to whom Rinaldo or Cosimo were in reality indifferent; these required gentle management, and as they still remained in the election purses it would have been dangerous to meddle

* Tommaso Forti, "*Foro Fiorentino*," MS. Magliabechiana Library.—Donato Giannoit, Repub^a. Fiorentina, cap. vi. —Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1090.

† Ibid., p. 1091.

with them; but still all this was to be compensated by restoring the nobles to their place in the commonwealth *. Mariotto Baldovinetti however proved by a running commentary on their history the imprudence of such a measure, and finished by advising Rinaldo to follow the counsel of the Count of Montefeltro to Boniface VIII.† Hold them in expectation of relief by gentle language but in deeds be more stringent than before. "For," said Mariotto, "he who forgets injuries abandons justice and "despises himself; and we have no right from reason, law, or "good custom, to forget the evils those nobles have caused to "the commonwealth. Let the conflagrations of Neri Abati, "the battles of the Bardi and Frescobaldi with the citizens, "the tyranny of the Duke of Athens; let all these cry loudly "against so monstrous a proposition." Rinaldo though politically right in his suggestion failed in getting it adopted, but gave a bitter reply to Mariotto whom he taunted, and justly, with being purchased by Cosimo's gold.

Meanwhile that exile fared sumptuously at Padua: honours were showered on him by the Venetians, and 150,000 florins offered him on loan to maintain his mercantile credit: his residence was a sort of shrine to which people of all ranks resorted in pilgrimage: at the express desire of the senate his place of exile was extended to Venice and all the Venetian territory not within a hundred and seventy miles of Florence: they presented him with one of their superb palaces for a dwelling, and requested through their ambassador that in imposing the Catasto his property should be considered as though

* Cavalcanti, Lib. ix., cap. xxiii.

† "E dissi: Padre, da che tu mi lavi
Di quel peccato, ove mo cader deggio,
Lungo promessa coll' attener corto
Ti farà trionfar nell' alto seggio."—*Infer.*, Can. xxvii.

Father said I, since thou can'st wash me clean
From sin, in which I 'm now about to fall,
Large promise ever, with performance scant,
Will make thee triumph in the lofty seat.

he were a Venetian citizen. No doubt this crafty government foresaw that Cosimo would return with augmented power and the complete discomfiture of his foes, and they like the unjust steward, propitiated or endeavoured to propitiate the mammon of unrighteousness, the future lord of Florence.

The council of Basle; the third for church reformation; which had met in 1431 under the sanction of Eugenius IV. was not long in following the usual course of public assemblies, and began to assert its own real or imagined rights at the expense of the pontiff while the latter could only regret having allowed it to be held so far from his own jurisdiction. His repentance came too late to prevent a contest of right and prerogative with the united episcopacy of Christendom: this was in truth a vexatious commencement of his pontificate but he felt still more sensibly the temporal enmity of Milan. Duke Philip, annoyed by Eugenio's alliance with Florence during the late war, reconciled himself with Francis Sforza whom he had just attempted to poison, and sent him, under pretence of defending his own property in the kingdom of Naples, to attack the ecclesiastical states. Sforza soon reduced Ancona and then all La Marca to obedience: seeing this, and stimulated as they said by the council of Basle; perhaps too in concert with Visconte; various condottieri such as Taliano Furlano, Antonella da Siena and some others, entered the duchy of Spoleto and ravaged all that country; even Niccolo Fortebraccio the pope's own general revolted, took possession of Tivoli and invested Rome *. Sforza with forces increased by his recent conquests passed into Umbria, reduced Todi, Amelia, Toscanelli, Otricoli, Mogliano, Sonano, and other places. The pope astounded at this storm promptly resolved to sanctify the aggressions of Sforza with the ecclesiastical standard, and in March 1434, advanced him to the high dignity of gonfalonier, with the possession of La Marca as

A.D. 1434.

* Muratori Annali, Anno 1433.

papal vicar during his lifetime. Sforza instantly marched against Fortebraccio, attacked and beat him at Tivoli, and laid siege to Montefiascone: this town would soon have fallen if Visconte, angry at Sforza's serving Eugenio against his wishes, had not thrown a large force under Piccinino into Perugia to arrest his progress. That city had become alarmed, but its illustrious citizen soon quieted all fear, saved Montefiascone and opened communications with Fortebraccio, while the latter awakened such a sedition in Rome that on the tenth of May Eugenio fled in a low disguise, hunted like a dog, and closely pursued to Ostia where he embarked in a small Neapolitan vessel and made his escape by way of Leghorn to Florence on the twenty-third of June *.

Rome remained in possession of Fortebraccio, but so tormented by various armies and the sallies from Saint Angelo that a truce followed and the bishops of Recanati and Turpia with general consent reëstablished the pope's authority. By Visconte's means a truce was then signed between Sforza and Fortebraccio, and Piccinino engaged not to meddle in the affairs of Rome. The people of Imola had also revolted from the pope and attached themselves to Visconte, upon which the lord of Faenza attacked them, and both Florence and Venice cried aloud that Philip had broken the peace. From Bologna too the papal governor had been expelled and Milanese troops were demanded: wherefore Venice; and Florence at the request of Venice and the pope; despatched Niccolo Tolentino with his army to preserve the peace while Visconte brought up Piccinino to oppose them. The latter threw himself into Imola, but being short of provisions enticed the allies to a battle and defeated them on the twenty-eighth of August at Castello San Piero or Santermo near Castelbolognese. Tolentino and four thousand five hundred men were taken prisoners, but only four were killed and thirty slightly wounded! This as regards the

* Neri Capponi, Com., tom. xviii., p. 1181.—Muratori Annali, Anno 1434.

men-at-arms who were sealed up in the finest armour ever made, can be comprehended; but with the light-armed troops seems marvellous, and totally different from the naval actions, where the slaughter was sickening. Piccinino gained this victory with inferior forces by skilful generalship against a combined army whose chiefs were at variance: yet no fault was attributed to Niccolo Tolentino, who died, or was murdered some months after to the great regret of Florence*.

The friends of Cosimo were not idle; Agnolo Acciajuoli, a young man of talent and heart whom Rinaldo attempted to browbeat in council, withstood him to his face and showed that his extreme youth did not prevent him from speaking and acting for the public good. This was not lost upon Rinaldo who early in the year managed to secure a letter which Agnolo had written to Cosimo urging immediate action or the renunciation of all expectation to return, and advising him also to secure Neri Capponi's support, who had been for a while banished by the Rinaldeschi and was therefore their enemy. Capponi's influence was great in Florence, where Cosimo's adherents were also increasing in number and discontent. "My dear friend," writes Acciajuoli, "thy exile is placed by Heaven in thine own "hands; for if thou wilt once rouse thee to work and not for- "get thyself amidst the down of ease, the pleasures of the "table, and the delights of lasciviousness (for Sardanapalus "from being a great monarch became the author of his own "death by such pleasures) it will be brief;—but if thou wouldst "expect favours from the merits of fasting, and votive offerings, "and holy pilgrimages, thy exile will be so long that it may be "called perpetual, because it will have had a beginning but no "end"†. Acciajuoli then professes his belief that unless de-

* Muratori Annali, Anno 1434.—Ammirato, Storia, Lib. xx., p. 1092, 3, 8, 9.—Neri Capponi; Commen. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1181, 2.

† Such advice and exhortation from a very young man to one who was nearly forty-five years of age, does not give a higher notion of Cosimo's moral qualities than his interview with the Captain of the People's officer does of his personal courage.

generated from ancient usage the present rulers would not be long before some quarrel with their neighbours brought on another war, in which case his return would be sure; because the mere want of money must render him necessary; for there was not a single citizen that could supply the government with a pistacio nut. Torture and ten years' exile to Cephalonia was the consequence of this epistle*.

September had now arrived and nearly a year of Cosimo's banishment was gone, when a new Seignory came into office with Niccolo di Cocco di Donato as gonfalonier of justice. The two priors for the minor arts were Piero di Dino and Fabiano Martini: the six others were Simone Guiducci, Neri Bartolini, Baldassero de' Santi, Giovanni Capponi, Luca di Buonaccorso Pitti†, and Tommaso Redditi; all staunch friends of Cosimo, wherefore the hopes and fears of antagonist factions were highly excited.

Rinaldo, who instantly comprehended the result, summoned his party to a secret meeting where it was proposed that in the usual interval of three days which elapsed between the election and installation to office, the late Gonfalonier Donato Velluti should summon a parliament, create a Balià, annul by popular authority the new Seignory, destroy the election purses after having chosen a favourable government, and prepare more stringent measures to secure the existing powers. This bold project was generally approved, and dangerous as it was, would probably have been attempted had not Antonio della Cava, a presumptuous citizen of indifferent reputation, declared the counsel good if Velluti had been a fit man to conduct such an enterprise, but as he was utterly insufficient success was impossible. The assembly remained silent; some because there was truth in the objection, others from fear, jealousy of Rinaldo,

* Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. ix., cap. xxviii.—Pignotti, Lib. iv., cap. ix.

† Buonaccorso Pitti was the author of the "*Cronica*" so frequently quoted in this book; and Luca the man who built the Pitti Palace.

or promises from the antagonist party; so the new Seignory were quietly initiated on the first of September 1434.

The gonfalonier's first act was to commit his predecessor to prison for public peculation and this confirmed all Rinaldo's apprehensions, wherefore assembling his party in the vestry of San Piero Maggiore he proposed an instantaneous attack on the palace as the only resource to secure their own safety and preserve their power*. But Palla Strozzi a refined and gentle person, more adapted to the delicacies of the table and the pleasures of study and the drawing-room than to lead armed men and bridle a tumultuous people, directly opposed Rinaldo because it was unlikely as he thought that with a beaten army and the vicinity of such a victor as Piccinino, the Seignory would plunge into domestic conflict at the first moments of their government. Niccolo Barbadoro's avarice it is said worked against his more warlike nature, and fears for his property made him eschew aggression: he deemed it better to wait for the attack than thus commit themselves: Rinaldo seeing that he was not supported, abruptly dismissed the assembly with an engagement to meet him in arms accompanied by all their followers on the place of Sant' Apollinare at the least movement of the Seignory †. Niccolo Donato lost no time in sounding his colleagues, and wrote the favourable result to Cosimo who was warned to be in readiness, as were also his friends in Florence: this was so promptly answered by the latter that the Seignory gained confidence enough to summon Rinaldo, Peruzzi, and Barbadoro before them. It was answered by an armed assemblage of the Rinaldeschi; at which, besides the above, the Guasconi, Rafficani, and Arriguci assisted, along with some of the Bardi, Serragli, Gianfiglazzi and Castellani besides many more great families and a multitude of clients. Giovanni Guicciardini and Palla Strozzi were looked for; the former sent a frivolous excuse, the

* Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. x., cap. iii. Comm. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. —Ibid., Lib. x., cap. iv.—Neri Capponi, 1182. † Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. vi.

latter appeared with two unarmed attendants, and many more followed these examples; so that not above six, or according to Cambi eight hundred armed men mustered on the twenty-sixth of September at the place of rendezvous. To oppose them on behalf of the Seignory were Rinaldo's brother Luca degli Albizzi, Niccolo Valori, Martelli Ginori, Neroni Dietosalvi, the Capponi, Pitti, Corbinelli, Minerbetti and Alessandri: besides these there were Paulo Rucellai, Bernardo Guigni and Niccolo Serragli who acted as mediators*.

The followers of Rinaldo were numerous and their fierceness superior to their force: bold as he was, their leader was taunted with slowness; many came for plunder many for blood and the slaking of long-delayed revenge. "Let us scour the city" cried Simone de' Bardi, "let us fill it with widows' tears, and the "streets with blood and carcases!" Others shouted aloud, and especially a certain Piero Arrigo, "Let us run to the "dwellings of the Seignory and plunder their goods; and "seize their mothers, and their wives, and their sons, and "their daughters, and their brothers; and all their nearest "and dearest' felations, and bind them to our shields and "targets, and carry them before us as we march to attack "the palace, so that the enemy's weapons shall only reach us "through the most precious objects of their love." "*Carne e fuoco*," "Flesh and fire," was their savage war-cry! And all this was the result of party spirit carried to its extremes; those dark and misty bounds that loom so distant and are yet so near; which passion never sees, and reason seldom contemplates!

Successive reports of all this were carried to the Seignory who were for a season intimidated; they hurried from chamber to chamber, from hall to hall in utter confusion, unable to decide on any plan until the leading citizens poured in to animate them: by their advice all the provision shops and markets were

* Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. vii.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1100.—Gio. Cambi, Stor., p. 194.—Neri Capponi, Comment. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1182.

suddenly and secretly emptied and the palace victualled for a siege; a more manly spirit now excited the government and everything was prepared for civil war *. Nevertheless the mediators, amongst whom was Pope Eugenius and Giovanni Vitelleschi bishop of Ricanati, endeavoured to bring the insurgents to reason and prevent mischief, for the whole town was full of peasantry and armed followers, all ravenous for plunder and thirsty for blood, but unconcerned about the justice or injustice of their cause or whom they massacred, and provided booty was to be had their conscience was proof against any crime however execrable: "No misdeed," says Cavalcanti, "could be so great as not to seem little to their desires;" and this infamous crowd struck such terror into the artificers and tradesmen that their shops were shut and they remained quiet, anxious, and discontented †, for the whole city was in despair ‡. Negotiations and discussions continued for some time until a final meeting took place at the papal residence: Ridolfo Peruzzi and Barbadoro submitted on understanding that the recall of Cosimo had not been brought into discussion by the Seignory; Rinaldo on the contrary, though shaken by the coolness and defection of his principal supporters, remained still obstinate. That night passed quietly, and next morning the two former citizens were pardoned; but Albizzi had at the pope's request repaired in sullen and lonely grandeur to his palace, as unbending as ever: he was received with soft words; and as Cavalcanti avers, crocodiles' tears: between persuasion and artifice his followers were dismissed, and with a promise of disarming even he himself consented to remain a prisoner under papal protection §. This and the insurgents' dispersion doubled the confidence of

* Neri Capponi, Com. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1182. — Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. x., capi. vii., viii.

† Gio. Cambi, p. 194. — Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. x.

‡ "*Like an ass in a hail-storm*," is our author's elegant simile. "Gli artefici stavano cheti e malcontenti, non altrimenti che sta l' asino alla gragnuola."

§ Memorie della Citta di Firenze da Boninsegni, Lib. iiº., p. 53, &c.—Gio. Cambi, p. 195.

government and troops of their rural followers came pouring into Florence under Papi de' Medici, Bartolommeo Orlandini and other popular chiefs; so that every entrance to the public square was strongly occupied and all the city teemed with armed men.

The return of Cosimo hitherto unmentioned, was now generally discussed; and thus supported, the Seignory on the twenty-eighth of September ordered the great bell to sound for a parliament. At its deep and well-known tones the whole republic rushed in arms to the palace: the Seignory accompanied by the episcopal mediators descended to the Ringhiera whence the usual questions were put, and answered in the affirmative by about three hundred and fifty voices immediately round the Ringhiera; nevertheless the most numerous Balià ever made in Florence, consisting of three hundred and fifty-nine members, was appointed *. This was a strong representation of the people and in this instance probably a fair one for the immediate object proposed; but foul or fair, whenever a parliament was called in Florence to create a Balià the appellants always took care to occupy every avenue to the hustings and all the space about them with their own staunch adherents, armed or unarmed as the case might be. In this Balià, united with the colleges, Cosimo's recall was voted almost by acclamation on the twenty-ninth of September 1434, one bold and eloquent young man named Bartolommeo di Cresci alone declaiming with daring energy against it, and audaciously offering, if any would join him, to pitch the gonfalonier and eight priors from the palace windows: several secret negatives appeared, but were smothered amongst the multitude of black beans which carried the all-absorbing question †. By the same act that created the present Balià all former ones from 1393 downwards were revoked; but though at the pope's intercession indemnity had been promised to the insurgents, neither the government nor

* Gio. Cambi, Storia, p. 194.—Cavalcanti, Lib. x., capi. xiii., xix.—Gio. Morelli, Rec., p. 122.

† Giov. Cambi., p. 196.—Gio. Morelli Ricor. p. 122.—Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. xv.

the people were inclined to pass things off so smoothly; and the Cosimeschi in the teeth of this solemn promise which probably saved their party, and certainly the city from ruin, exiled without scruple Rinaldo, Strozzi, Peruzzi, part of the Guicciardini and Guadagni, some of the Uzzani, Barbadoro, Gianni, and many others; and these proscriptions were renewed from time to time after the month of November, when Cosimo was already returned and a new Seignory drawn, or rather selected by his party for their rabid persecuting violence and vindictive character*. The members were Lando di Biliotti, Piero del Benino, Andrea di Nardi, Leonardo da Verazzano, Brunetto di Domenico Bechaio, Antonio d' Agnolo, Antonio di Masi, Ugolino di Mantelli, with Giovanni Minerbetti for their gonfalonier, a man described by Cavalcanti, as more bold than rational, and who loved discord better than his country's good†. Near eighty citizens were thus banished, fined, imprisoned, tortured, or otherwise punished by the vindictiveness of faction. The scrutiny purses were diligently weeded of all enemies, and "*Accoppiatori*" nominated, by whom the above Seignory had been studiously selected‡.

When Rinaldo heard his sentence, from which all the feigned or real remonstrances of Eugenius were unable to shield either him or his companions: he is said to have exclaimed with a bitter smile, "Did I then ever hope that I should be allowed to remain "in my country by one who had been driven from his own?" The notice of his exile, sent as a matter of form to the pontiff called forth some common-place condolence and advice, to which Rinaldo contemptuously answered: "O Eugenius, Holy Father! "I marvel not at my own ruin; but I do blame myself A.D. 1433. "for trusting to the promises of one who being unable "to aid himself could never vindicate the rights of others. I

* Nardi, delle Istorie di Firenze, Lib. i., p. 15.

† Gio. Cambi, p. 199.—Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. xx.

‡ Ibid., Lib. x., cap. xvi.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 1102.

" ought to have known that the fluent tongue of your messenger
" Vitelleschi was only used to entice me to disarm. I did know
" it. But love of my country prevailed! Let none believe that
" I had not ample means of resistance with the Guelphic aid.
" But because I would not bathe the streets in blood, fill the city
" with corpses and her dwellings with tears, I resigned myself
" into your hands; yet be ye assured that I had my remedy.
" Niccolo Piccinino is at hand with ample forces not only to pro-
" tect me, but to expel all my enemies, as they now expel me
" from the city: and to pay for this I had only to league with
" Philip Maria Visconte and thus after so many wars have
" secured a permanent peace. You know well Eugenius that I
" believe this to be a freak of fortune augmented by wicked men,
" and that times may change however unpromising, and how I
" or others will be better taught by this example; and you know
" also that as the injury is more bitter, so much sharper should
" be the revenge. Behold the heavens! A long rain makes a
" long drought, a hot summer a cold winter. But let us quit
" this trifling, for I long to be gone from so bad a race and labour
" for my return with a leafy crown as the conqueror of a faction
" so hateful. And to this city I say (for the shame of thy citi-
" zens) that I quit thee with glory and praise: because in the
" many dignities thou hast given to me I never pronounced
" judgment against reason, nor ever wronged an individual,
" nor ever denied a debt, nor prolonged a suit; but always to
" poor and rich, even before the legal period, I gave my judg-
" ment. And for thee O Florence I bore all the weight of la-
" bour that the cares of such a city impose; and as my reward,
" under thy favour,—I am expelled! Certes he who confides
" in a priest's word, is like a blind man without a guide." He
then departed *.

The wheel of fortune had turned, and Rinaldo's great rival

* Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. xix.

when fully certified of his recal came back like a Roman conqueror! From Venice to Florence was a chain of flowers; honours and festivities met his homeward steps, and joy and gladness accompanied him to his native city: Cosimo arrived on the sixth of October, dismounted at the public palace, supped and slept in the same place, next morning he visited the pope and then quietly resumed his former position in the commonwealth. A.D. 1434.

Then came all the mischiefs of a restoration; and fines, exile, imprisonment, torture, and death ministered to the evil passions of an angry faction. Averardo did not long enjoy this triumph; he died unregretted on the fifth of December, but his spirit remained in full vigour; and with the exception of engaging his friend Francesco Sforza as captain of the Florentine armies, Cosimo finished the year 1434 in an uninterrupted course of political vengeance *.

Cotemporary Monarchs.—England, Scotland, France, Castile and Aragon. No change since 1428. (Chapter xxx.)—Portugal: John I. to 1433, then Edward I.—The German, Greek, and Ottoman Emperors, as in 1428.—Popes, Martin, V. to 1431, then Eugenius IV.—The Council of Basle, the third Great Council for Church Reformation lasted from 1431 to 1438. It abolished Annates and Reservations, and made other reforms.

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* Ricordi di Cosimo de' Medici.—Gio. Cambi, p. 204.—Ammirato, Stor., Lib. xx., p. 1102-3.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

FROM A.D. 1435 TO A.D. 1451.

COSIMO'S restoration is perhaps the most important event of Florentine history, inasmuch as it curbed the turbulence of faction undermined what liberty existed, and gained a power for his family that was never permanently lost. All previous revolutions were either transitory or only modifications of a state of things already existing, the mere phases of the political planet with more or less of illumination; but from this point the star of Medici burned with a clear and steady though deceitful light which no subsequent tempest could totally obscure. All after-events were only consequences or ramifications of this deep root, and every pretension to real liberty withered in their shade; it left the outward form of a republic impregnated with the steady and permanent character of absolute monarchy.

A.D. 1435.

But ere we proceed it may be convenient to review the Florentine institutions in order to judge more impartially of what Cosimo accomplished; what liberties he undermined, what powers he destroyed; what good, or what evil were the immediate consequences of his successful ambition; for under him the future principality may be said to have been conceived and formed and in progress of nativity.

In contemplating the story of Florence our eyes are naturally attracted towards the institutions of that republic with which she was so often and so intimately connected; the dark, enduring, and mysterious Venice. Venice from a pure democracy became by a singular combination of circumstances one of the most exclusive aristocracies in the world; and became so, broadly speaking, without any usurpation of the rights of others. The first Venetian refugees had equal privileges; but when time and successful industry had bettered their condition, the stream of emigration which had been constantly flowing towards the Lagoons was gradually augmented and as the community enlarged a change in their civic regulations was deemed expedient. Hitherto all settlers had entered into coequal rights and duties as they successively established their domicile amidst the free waters of the Adriatic: but at a certain period of their history the Venetians refused any longer to continue this or give such strangers as might thereafter arrive any political privileges beyond what were due to them as subjects; namely, the protection of person and property, and perfect freedom of action in all but state affairs: to these they were no longer admitted and thenceforth became subjects, not citizens. A rapid increase of population, the commerce, riches, power, and growing influence of this community, gave great value to the original democracy which gradually became a privileged and powerful class: primitively large, and identic with the old population; afterwards small, from the growth and pressure of the new; but condensed by that very pressure into a more strongly knit and compact body the concentration of ancient power, which assumed a general empire. In this there was no infringement of others' claims; no usurpation of illegitimate authority; no encroachment on public liberty; the aristocracy reserved their pristine rights, but did no more; they made and enforced certain laws applicable to all who sought the advantages of their government; and if strangers

found this convenient it was with a clear understanding that they were not citizens; they might demand protection, but could hardly complain of injustice.

Such is the broad principle upon which rose the aristocracy of Venice: its details, policy, secret history, and early struggles for power, are all foreign to this work except as they occasionally bear on the affairs of Florence. But there was a remarkable difference between these two states: under their DOGE, their TEN, their SENATE, their GREAT COUNCIL and other auxiliaries the Venetians worked silently mysteriously and unchangeably: all was veiled: decrees went forth of the sanctuary but they issued from an ideal being: they were not the work of any single citizen; none proposed, none seconded, none opposed them: to the public eye they were the fiat of some invisible everlasting power without feelings, passions, or any touch of humanity: awful, severe, all-seeing, all-powerful, but not all-just. The exhibition of political talent, eloquence, passion, virtue, vice, or patriotism; whatever it might have been *within* the political cloisters; was never, in matters of domestic government, breathed beyond them. The people knew neither friend nor foe, for all varieties of opinion were fused into one homogeneous whole which alone went forth as a decree of the Venetian republic: popularity was there unknown to statesmen: no eye was on them, no ear heard them, no shout greeted them, the voice of public opinion was smothered in the Lagoons; and except as warriors, praise or blame from their fellow-citizens never influenced a single action of Venetian statesmen after the final settlement of their government. Hence the stern, searching, relentless character of all their acts; and the immolation of honour, virtue, religion, moral dignity, and every gentler feeling to the murky idol of their state. But in suppressing faction it secured strength, union, decisiveness, and domestic peace; and enabled the republic to maintain a steady oneness of policy, which gene-

rating uniform movement and lastingness, preserved it until the whole body becoming effete expired of mere imbecility.

Florence on the contrary was all openness, faction, turbulence, disunion, and mutability; the faults and virtues of her sons were palpable; there was no national, no constitutional secrecy; but there was civil war, massacre, conflagration, ruin of families, exile, and depopulation; which the Venetians had not. On the other hand; in Florence men looked to personal fame, reputation, popularity, and public opinion for advancement and support (although this last was generally sectarian) and the whole body of citizens had, or believed they had, a part in the commonwealth. They did in fact share in the appointment of their magistrates; that is they had the privilege of electing them. But what were those magistrates? Not the strong self-acting movement of Venetian power that owned no master and made each its slave; but the flexile talons of ill-omened faction. There was in fact no government in Florence: there was a rattling mass of powerful machinery, ready for any impulse and never without one; good if honestly managed, but harsh and dangerous in self-interested or unskilful hands. The national spirit was called up to give force to the commonwealth and it did so; but the commonwealth had neither the power nor the inclination to secure civil liberty as we know it, from the vindictive fury of party or the tyranny of potent citizens. There was no balancing power; the people were satisfied with that of *electing* their magistrates and clothing them in popular authority without any stipulation for their manner of using it.

When Baldaccio d'Anghiari was treacherously murdered and thrown from the palace window, his corpse lay for nearly a whole day in the public place where it fell, and although he was a friend of Neri Capponi, the most influential man after Cosimo in Florence, and an old and valued general of the republic, few thought it strange; enough that the Seignory

had done it, some secret necessity was supposed, fear acted its usual part with friends and none else ever troubled themselves.

Yet, with a mutability beyond example in domestic affairs, the foreign policy of Florence was as constant and prudent as that of Venice in regard to the balance of power and general condition of Italy: true, the fear of Milanese dominion as it more nearly affected themselves was the moving spring, and when their own ambition held the scale the balance often wavered. But to judge better of these institutions it may be useful to examine their powers, as well at least as our scattered and uncertain records will permit, for many things are alluded to by Florentine writers as then of common notoriety which are now incomprehensible.

The extreme jealousy amongst both Venetians and Florentines of their so much boasted liberty would naturally lead us to the modern notion of that word, even now in many countries but ill understood and therefore not duly appreciated; but where thought even was almost fettered, as at Venice, could there have been any real liberty? Neither thought nor tongue were shackled at Florence, and so far they were free; but no individual or his property were safe from the vengeance of a powerful enemy; a poor Florentine's house was not his castle, his possessions were not his own, nor was even his life, though harmless, always to be counted on when faction needed its sacrifice: witness Baldaccio's fate which as will hereafter be seen mainly originated in the private malice of an Orlandini. The Florentine magistrates could oppress the weak but were bearded by the strong; they could *assist* one faction to crush another; but could hardly prevent it if they would, for they themselves were always partisans and often tools in the hands of others. We have seen that besides heavy and unequal taxes, an early source of Florentine discord was the ambition of rich men to govern as a body and the higher wish of some amongst them to rule alone and individually. In opposition to this was

the desire of the lower classes to prevent such usurpation and acquire for themselves a degree of civil liberty free from private oppression which would relieve them from illegal masters; while that of the middle classes when they existed was in addition to enjoy those legitimate honours and employments to which their position entitled them. The great object of good government is to gratify these natural desires and many others, without public injury, collision of classes, or undue preponderance in any order of the state; but this was not achieved by Florence.

Frederic II. upheld the Ghibeline aristocracy; but at his death the Florentines asserted and established their liberty under new forms of popular government, yet so awkwardly that it begat infinite discontent directed as it was against the nobles especially the Ghibelines who had previously been omnipotent in Florence. They naturally watched their opportunity and under the auspices of Manfred regained authority with a wide-spread banishment of Guelphic families: but intent on power they did not trouble themselves about the people; and when fear ultimately compelled them to attempt the reconciliation of all parties by a popular government it was too late, for they were immediately expelled by a great national movement. The citizens being anxious for peace recalled every exile and they came, but had learned no wisdom; their passions and prejudices were in full force; old quarrels broke out afresh and no man seems to have arisen who was equal to the task of restoring tranquillity by the establishment of a wise constitution. It would indeed have been an arduous one where the same spirit of domination possessed the whole aristocracy and the people were as yet not sufficiently exasperated to feel their full power, or sufficiently experienced to use it with moderation.

Renewed insolence and oppression on the part of the former soon after produced the gonfaloniership of justice as a curb; then came the law of the Divieto which spread public hon-

ours over a wider surface and prevented the nobles from perpetuating them in their own families: many other regulations followed in succession, but every step was a quarrel; the city was divided against itself; two fierce parties with antagonist interests were in constant strife; there was no union but in external war; the people were insulted and oppressed in every private transaction, against laws which were sharp enough to irritate but insufficient to control *.

These evils brought out Giano della Bella and his "Ordinances of Justice" which were too harsh even as a punishment, yet with strong provocation: they did not succeed, for they were a penal sentence against delinquents with arms in their hands; a bill of pains and penalties against a powerful mass; an attainder; the punishment of existing innocence, and of children yet unborn. Indefinite punishment for finite crime is injustice; yet Giano's honest indignation blinded him to the true character of his work and noble families were at once excluded from the Seignory, besides other degradations, and power given to increase the number of delinquents at will. Military force was necessarily added to give vitality to law, and four thousand civic guards were placed at the gonfalonier's disposal. The severity of this act produced more fury than obedience, more restraint than respect; yet Giano meant well; he generously and fearlessly repelled oppression and the blow hit hard, but recoiled on his own head: he was banished; tumults followed, and there was a partial restoration of rights to the aristocracy. Soon after came the Bianchi and Neri factions, and they proved the weakness of Florentine institutions by allowing private quarrels to swell into public war and national calamity. The pacification effected by the Cardinal of Prato lasted but a moment; his creation of gonfaloniers of companies and all

* It has been well said by Landor, in his *Imaginary Dialogues*, but alluding to England, that "the *hand* of the law is on the poor; its *shadow* only on the rich."

his restrictive laws against the aristocracy were insufficient to maintain the peace even while he legislated; and ere he quitted Florence all was again in commotion, and soon after in arms. His labours were exclusive, sectarian, partial; and inspired no confidence: blood and conflagration were the comments on his work, and seventeen hundred houses were consumed in the struggle! Afterwards the drawing of magistrates by lot was introduced and the two councils, of the People and Community created: then the Duke of Athens was placed at the head of the commonwealth and presently became its tyrant, but was forthwith expelled by the united strength of every faction. This restored liberty, justice, peace, and a moment's good fellowship between the nobles and people: the lull was brief; discord again burst forth and civil war once more thundered in the streets of Florence. The Bardi, Frescobaldi, and other clans were fiercely driven from their homes and the nobles reduced to complete and final subordination. The other extreme of society then rose up, and the sedition of the Ciompi reigned paramount for three years: Georgio Scali, the people's champion was subsequently beheaded and the fire mastered; but with partial bursts and sudden explosions from the ruins. The Popolani Grassi now resumed their authority; but suspicion was abroad; no confidence connected man with man, and fear was ever on the watch lest fortune should place the government in the hands of antagonists: when this occurred it was jealously wrested from them on trifling pretences as happened to Alberti and Magalotti in 1387. Then followed a recal of exiles and the strong government of Maso degli Albizzi; rigorous and severe at first, afterwards comparatively gentle and popular, but at all times able: Niccolò da Uzzàno had continued this to more than half a century's duration when his setting sun beheld the rise of Cosimo.

In contemplating such a state of perennial turbulence and misrule with all their unmentioned evils, we can scarcely

wonder at the Florentines being finally wearied and disgusted; and hailing the man who would restore peace, though at the expense of their so-called liberty, as the "Father of his Country." Up to this period there were always two parties in Florence, one of the great, the other of the people: by the *Great*, in the beginning was meant the nobles; after whose downfal the principal burgher families stepped into their political position and under a more popular name followed a similar course of insolence and oppression, but with greater impunity.

The "*People*" must not be understood as the mere populace, who were no more in the civic institutions of Florence than menial servants in a private family; they were necessary, but had no voice nor any political rights in the commonwealth. The "*People*" was that portion of the poorer citizens with civic rights or civic responsibilities who were opposed to the aggressions of the rich and powerful; in other words to the "*Great.*" They were not only that multidude which did not share in the public government and yet possessed something or exercised some trade in the city; but many others besides who did participate in the magistracies. All these in common desired liberty; or more strictly speaking protection in their private affairs from the tyranny and arrogance of the great; but the last portion cherished the further hope of a more frequent participation of public honours, and of subordinate political power as a means to that end. The middle class if it can fairly be called so, during the meridian of aristocratic sway was composed of the principal popular families; but they soon became a virtual aristocracy though despised as such by, and totally distinct from the ancient nobility.

At first therefore there seems to have been no middle class properly so called, for the populace as an extreme, were never considered part of the commonwealth nor cared for by any party, and the people came into immediate contact with the higher orders whether ancient nobles or Popolani Grassi, but

roughly, not courteously*. The result was a continual struggle between a body, composed of rank dignity and intelligence, reenforced by riches and insatiable for power; and a humble though numerous mass of poorer citizens who felt its misuse and panted for emancipation: thence everlasting strife and often the submission of both to the command of a stranger, such as the Duke of Athens and others. Still the two parties retained their balance; for when the people ruled, one powerful citizen frequently defied all the potency of government and with the aid of friends, clients, and his own resources audaciously defended himself; trusting if too hard pressed to the general support of his class. From this preponderance of individual power and general balance of parties it followed that the strong oppressed the weak: for had that of the people been superior, the nobleman who had no moral scruples about robbing his neighbour would still have refrained through fear of the law had the law been efficient: but this rarely occurred.

A middle class of citizens; or what may for distinction be so designated; did spring up in Florence from the popularising of noble families; (probably those which are sometimes called "*Spicciolati*," as detached from the ancient stock and yet not united with their adopted order) and also from the promotion of some popular families by Cosimo, of which more anon; but principally from those who being eligible to the magistracy, yet from choice and other reasons lived retired and aloof from faction as well as from insult and injury, if they could accomplish it; yet sometimes wished to enjoy the civic honours to which they were entitled. It seems probable that many of those called "*Scioperati*," who entered so frequently into the public magistracies, belonged to this class and exercised some modifying influence over the violence of party spirit.

The "*Plebe*" or lowest classes, as already said had no civic rank; they possessed no real property and lived from hand to

* Donato Giannotti della Republica Fiorentin., Lib. i., cap. v., p. 48.

mouth by manual labour; but they loved quiet, because commotion stopped trade, and then they starved: their tumults were from want, hard task-masters, and misrule; or its consequences as affected themselves. According to Giannotti if quiet reigned amongst the higher classes of Florence the people were never tumultuous, and unless excited by their superiors in rank and reputation were rarely so at any time*. The sedition of the Ciompi was probably the unintentional work of Salvestro de' Medici and others who thus excited a really suffering and therefore inflammable people, and then were unable to control them. The poor could not obtain their reasonable desires and therefore revolted; for people are attached in general to those governments that afford such gratification, or which they believe afford it: the Florentine poor desired no compulsory masters but the laws or the magistrates who represented them; they sought impartial justice and had no further ambition: the middle classes, or rather the people, had; they as already remarked looked to legitimate honours and office; and the highest class to arbitrary rule. In Florence, generally speaking, only the last succeeded and that partially, but attended by tumult and difficulty: the result of all was discontent with excessive and general excitement so that any change became palatable.

The principal defects of Florentine institutions up to Cosimo's return were what we shall now endeavour to describe. These institutions were composed in the first place, of the "Seignory," namely a Gonfalonier of Justice and eight "Priors of the Arts" or "of Liberty:" of two auxiliary "Colleges," one of twelve Buonomini the other of sixteen Gonfaloniers of Companies, and altogether named "The College" or more generally the "Seignory and Colleges" the latter being a sort of counsellors to the former. Then came the Senate, which varied in name and number from 1343 to 1494, and seems to have been identical with the Council of Two Hundred. Besides these were two greater councils:

* Donato Giannotti, Della Republica Fiorentina, Lib. i., cap. v., p. 58-9.

that of the People, composed exclusively of Popolani; and that of the Community, or Common Council which admitted both people and nobles. Inferior magistracies will be noticed elsewhere.

The nomination of all magistracies which at first was open, afterwards fell into the hands of a more select body called the "Squittino" or scrutiny; and the act of selection to fill the grand purses was denominated "*Squittinare*" or scrutinising; because the character, qualities, and pretensions of the candidates were then minutely investigated. This was theoretically good, but its effects are described as evil and corrupting; for this ceremony taking place only every three or five years and being secret, those candidates for the public magistracies whose names once entered the purses (and this seems always to have been well known) became negligent of their conduct; for honesty in those days appears only to have been practised as far as it was the best policy. All laws, decrees, or provisions of any kind, whether public or private, proposed in the Seignory were obliged to be approved by the colleges, senate, and finally by the two remaining councils*.

This also seemed theoretically good, but as the priors were drawn by lot it frequently happened that one Seignory was of one faction the next of another, or perhaps a mixture of both; and the colleges partook of the same mutable and motley character, or peradventure differed altogether from the Seignory: thus a reasonable, a tyrannical, or a divided government turned up as chance directed. Hence also the many evils so frequently related in these pages as the exclusive results of faction; and hence the permanent despotism of Cosimo who ruled the rulers and dispensers of life and death. In order not to quit this convenient instrument he chose the "*Accoppiatori*" so dexterously, besides other means hereafter to be mentioned, that his own creatures were sure to form the bulk of every council and magistracy in the state. Cosimo here only practised

* Nardi, Storia della Città di Firenze, Lib. i°, pp. 11, 12, 13.

the lessons his enemies had taught him, the actual political arts of Florentine statesmen; but he did it on a great scale, with a harder hand, a heavier purse, and a bolder conscience than any. No people can pretend to more freedom than the liberty of dubbing themselves slaves where, (even when uninfluenced by faction) the pleasure of six citizens out of nine was in many cases law, and could destroy or pardon as they listed. "*We are the Law and the Judge*," cried the prior Guido Magalotti to Cosimo himself when he wanted to save an innocent woman and child from destruction! And Cosimo bowed meekly to the rule for he intended to practise it.

Although the general decrees of the Seignory where every measure began had also to pass other councils, they were yet rarely opposed, and much despotic authority was assumed by them in individual cases even to the instant deprivation of life: their power was feared and fearful, and only depended on themselves to be tyrannical, as it commonly proved.

The Balia or Decemvirate of War was another power of enormous strength and amazing amplitude: seven citizens could there make peace or war impose the most grinding contributions, or form any regulations they pleased to carry out their views; and even raise armies to unlimited numbers, or only limited by the public credit and resources of which they were the managers; and all without control. Considering the far-reaching consequences of war even in its mildest form, but at that time peculiarly horrible; no nation could call itself free when exposed to the action of such powers, unless it were proved to be with the general national consent and not by the intrigues of a faction; and even then it was only the liberty of ruining and enslaving themselves and their posterity.

To direct this formidable engine Cosimo made use of the "*Specchio*" as already told, and so gained extensive influence if not always a majority in that council. This was before his exile; for afterwards things were more shortly and effectively

arranged; but it served to encourage war and consolidate his personal influence, and though the country was disgraced and ravaged Cosimo prospered; yet all this mischief could be effected by seven citizens without control or responsibility*. The necessity for such a board arose out of the ephemeral nature of the Seignory which allowed no time to carry on any extended operation whether external or domestic, and necessarily exposed state secrets to the knowledge of a rapid succession of chief magistrates who in their retirement from office might neither be discreet nor honest.

In domestic matters the evil of this system was glaring: each new Seignory, eager to distinguish its ephemeral existence by some attractive performance hurried forward every affair; their acts followed each other with the rapidity of a blacksmith's hammer; a few favourite materials were hastily worked up for the nonce and, finished or unfinished, left to their fate with the succeeding government; but no regulated warmth in constant action remained to temper and anneal society or improve its character.

The college of gonfaloniers created by the cardinal of Prato for the defence of liberty, that is of the people against the great, was generally composed of young men and frequently acted with more violence than judgment; imbued like every other magistracy with the passions of the day, they were often as we are told, the authors of oppression and tumult and causers of much mischief, for it was a powerful and reputed office and greatly coveted. In one of the many plagues that devastated Florence; probably that of 1348 when few would remain there for the purposes of government, a remedial law was passed which rendered every citizen ineligible to office whose grandfather had not sat or his name been seen (or "*Veduto*") amongst those liable to be drawn for the "*Tre Maggiori*" as they were called, that is the Seignory and the two colleges. Many, who would

* Giannotti, della Rep. Fior., Lib. ii., cap. v., p. 78, &c.

otherwise have fled were arrested by the wish of securing that right for their posterity and it was of infinite service to Cosimo, who by means of his influence could at pleasure infringe this law and virtually nominate them all; wherefore the whole city paid court to him not only to accomplish their own but even their infant children's nomination.

These infant magistrates were not new in the history of Florentine faction, but the system was perhaps more securely, and certainly more permanently organised by Cosimo, and thus the "Defenders of Liberty;" as the gonfaloniers of companies affectedly called themselves; became the mere handmaidens of despotism. The gonfalonier of justice had no greater voting power than the priors, but he had the privilege of presiding over them and every other council at his pleasure: this right was given in order to form a session of the Seignory independent of their *Proposto* or diurnal president in case of his refusing at any time to propose necessary measures, a circumstance that faction rendered of frequent occurrence. Thus the gonfalonier although only equal in authority was superior in dignity and official influence to all the Seignorial magistrates; and as they and all the other courts were despots in their line, and generally tyrannical, he also must have had the power of being so, for none deliberated without him if he wished to attend and their decrees were his: wherefore it follows, that although he could not compel he influenced every one, and they in a manner depended on him. Hence the gonfalonier of justice really governed the state, because by means of the Seignory and colleges he could carry any measures and not only arrest the proceedings of other magistracies but altogether prevent their deliberations. For this, says Giannotti, he had only to humour the Seignory and colleges and profess himself a staunch defender of liberty against the great, (which in Florence was as sure a catch-word as Church and State once was in England) and if supported by them he became omnipotent. But without such

management success was rare and difficult; for if he worked by favour of the "Ten" alone he displeased the priors and colleges, and through them the citizens, as the former would complain of neglect and slight both by him and the Balià, and the latter would echo it; and according as this system was skilfully followed or neglected so was the gonfalonier popular or otherwise.

The office being so ephemeral great constitutional mischief could not ensue, yet much particular injury and private tyranny was practicable and practised; but when one private, irresponsible, and extraneous power, like Cosimo's, brought an irresistible and permanent influence to bear on every magistracy; or rather when every magistracy was his own creature and worked like puppets to his will, it became a permanent though invisible monarchy *.

These were some of the radical evils that generated misrule and general discontent in Florence and spoiled its character as a free nation, for republics are seldom free except for licentiousness. But to these evils may be added the great length and cost of law-suits and the general corruption of law: the rich and powerful influenced both civil and criminal justice publicly and privately as suited their interest or faction; plaintiff and defendant were often ruined together after long years of litigation; strangers who had the misfortune to get into the Florentine courts lifted up their hands and cried in amazement "*Is this liberty?*" and some of the noblest of native families had been reduced to destitution.

In this state of things Cosimo returned, an angry vindictive chief with a still more vengeful crew to keep his passions uppermost: he had been ill-used, he was the people's leader and idol, and soon banished almost all their greatest enemies of the opposite faction; few remained but the insignificant or abjectly submissive or those who shrunk into obscurity and oblivion at his frown. The people rejoiced at their enemies' discomfiture

* Giannotti, Della Rep. Fiorent., Lib. ii., cap. viii., p. 94.

and Cosimo was finally hailed by a public decree as "PADRE DELLA PATRIA." The father of that country which he depopulated by the most numerous proscription ever known in Florence even in its wildest periods, and which has been compared only with those of Sylla and the triumvirate; for blood, although not profusely spilt, and when shed, perhaps it was with some show of justice, yet blood was not wanting to satiate Cosimo's vindictiveness and the vengeance of his exasperated followers. Boninsegni and Cavalcanti give us the names of more than a hundred families either exiled or rendered incapable of office, without counting all the individuals of houses which are only named collectively, and apparently innocent of any crime except that of relationship with the chiefs of an antagonist faction*.

The nobles of his own party he made Popolani, but excluded all others by a sweeping edict prohibiting them thenceforth from the enjoyment of any public office whatever†: this as will be seen hereafter was a sagacious act, and collaterally strengthened by his intimate connection with the Italian states which enabled him to paralyse all his enemies' efforts to return. One result of this searching persecution was, that in Florence, which had been previously divided into two great parties, the third order of citizens already mentioned became moulded and augmented in several ways. First, those great families which submitted to Cosimo necessarily reduced their former magnificence and sank down somewhat nearer to the more social level of popular equality; and without throwing off that inexpressible delicacy of tastes and manners inherent to gentle blood, and thus losing themselves in the common crowd, they maintained a neutral position somewhere between their former station and present necessities. Secondly, Cosimo ennobled many popular families; that is, he advanced them from the Minor to the

* Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. xvi. and xx. —Boninsegni, Memorie della Città di Firenze, Libro ii°, p. 56.—Macchiavelli, Lib. v.—Nardi, Istor. Fior., Lib. i°. —Nerli, Comment., Lib. iii.—Pignotti, Stor. Tos., Lib. iv., cap. x., p. 54.

† Boninsegni, Lib. ii., p. 61.

Major Arts, which amongst other advantages rendered them eligible to more of the superior offices of state than before. These citizens without shouldering the nobles and great Popolani still rose above their former station and increased the numbers of this detached class of society. Thirdly, many other great families although not forced to retire yet having in this revolution lost political power and influence and being necessarily excluded from public employment, soon found themselves deserted by old adherents; wherefore they also dwindled to comparative insignificance and augmented this new order of citizens. Thus but few families remained who were not Cosimo's friends and creatures and many of these with diminished greatness, but all subservient.

The mainspring of sedition was also slackened by weakening the great Popolani, diminishing their means of oppression, and even their power of resistance to the people, of whom Cosimo was the declared champion. The management of the former was thus facilitated; that of the latter became comparatively easy because they were not generally ambitious to govern but did look for quiet and protection; and both these they had in the beginning from Cosimo*.

So far, if we consider these results alone in comparison with foregone times and independent of the severity that produced them, Cosimo's advent to power was eminently beneficial, for nothing could be worse than the former state of distraction in Florence; but to accomplish it the people were decimated. "Better," exclaimed the inexorable Cosimo to a friend who expostulated with him on the exile of so many citizens and noble families, by which said the latter "this city will be deso-" lated," "*Better have a desolated than a lost city, and as to* " *the diminution of citizens,*" he contemptuously added "*there* " *need be no alarm, for with seven or eight yards of scarlet we* " *can daily make enough of them.*" Alluding to the scarlet

* Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 1.—Giannotti, Lib. i., cap. v., p, 53.

cloaks worn in those days by Florentine citizens*. Cosimo doubtless felt that a new system required new men, and men who depended on his favour alone for their advancement; hence a number of Florentine families rose with the Medici from the inferior trades to subsequent distinction, and even at that moment showed a strong front against the noble Popolani, who were treated with such rigour that the ascendant faction feared a general union amongst them in opposition to Cosimo.

To subdue them more effectually and at the same time conciliate the ancient nobles their hereditary enemies, he restored, as Albizzi had before proposed, almost all the latter to popular rights, and amongst them the historian Cavalcanti. The few who were excluded from this benefit remained in a more helpless condition than before, for they were rendered ineligible to any office in the commonwealth; and even the more fortunate of those restored could not aspire to the Seignory for ten years. Thus by a present benefit and the prospect of complete emancipation the support of a powerful body was secured for ten years without immediately clothing them in much or dangerous authority †.

This brief review it is hoped will help us to enter with more facility on the second great epoch of Florentine history, the Medician ascendancy; for though the republic lasted nearly a century in form and name and outward feature, and with its institutions apparently untouched, its story becomes almost that of the Medici; and subsequently identified with it until the extinction of that dynasty.

Cosimo became gonfalonier of justice for January and February 1435, and his triumph as already said, was followed by more than the usual number of exiles, admonitions, and persecutions; not from politics alone but from rapacity, cupidity, and all the evil passions springing out of clanship and private in-

* Ammirato, Stor. Fiorent, Lib. xxi., vol. iii., p. 4.—Bruto, Storia Fior., Lib. i., pp. 42, 43.—Ammirato, Stor. Fior., Lib. xxi., vol. iii°, p. 4.—Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. xx.—Rinaldo as we have seen would have thus acted for the same purpose.

† Nerli, Commentarj, Lib. iii., p. 45.

fluence linked with power ambition and revenge. Some blood too flowed, for during the gonfaloniership of Neri Capponi, in 1436, Antonio di Bernardo Guadagni and four other citizens were decapitated. Amongst the latter were Zenobi Belfradelli, Michele and Cosimo Barbadoro and Antonio Pierozzi, the three first quitting their place of exile had gone to Venice and having been found plotting with Pierozzi were to the disgrace of that state delivered up to punishment at the demand of Florence and unmercifully though not illegally executed *. Others were condemned to death but saved by Cosimo who declared that he would not have his gonfaloniership stained with blood; but many of the possessions belonging to the opposite faction were sold at a low price to his partisans and this gave fresh zest to persecution †.

On the other hand the Alberti and all others banished by the Albizzi were recalled; the name of every suspected person was removed from the purses and replaced by that of a partisan; all judges of life and death were exclusively chosen from the chiefs of the ascendancy, and a decree passed against any exile's return after his term was expired unless thirty-four out of thirty-seven votes were favourable in a government of the most deadly enemies! All correspondence with exiles was forbidden; every sign, every custom, every word, that displeased the ruling faction was severely punished; and where no cause existed for persecution the parties were ruined by contributions levied expressly for that purpose; so that ere long the whole of their antagonists were either beheaded exiled or ruined by Cosimo's party, besides those that died in banishment. And to hold all suspected persons in terror, power over life and property was given to the *Otto della Guardia* who were authorised to punish not only overt acts of sedition but any intemperate expressions displeasing to Cosimo and his supporters.

For external security alliances were formed with Rome,

* Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 7, vol. iii. † Cavalcanti, Lib. x., cap. xx., p. 619.

Milan, and Venice; peace having been signed and a league made in August 1435, between those powers, under an engagement that if any one of them waged war on another all three powers were immediately to attack the aggressor; all other conditions remaining as before this outbreak.

Thus were the lives and happiness of whole nations sacrificed! War was not felt by sovereigns or by soldiers; the poor alone suffered: two armies manœuvred, encountered, struggled a while as if for exercise in almost pre-concerted movements; and then one dispersed: prisoners were taken, examined, and ransomed, and the adjacent country plundered; the dwellings burned, the harvests ruined, and the people murdered! And thus ended war, without gain or glory! And then came peace with general impoverishment and no security!

Two rival schools of arms occupied Italy at this period: the "*Braccesca*," or those who had learned war under Braccio da Montoni, and the "*Sforzesca*" or the pupils of his rival the first Sforza. At the head of the latter was his son the celebrated Francis Sforza afterwards Duke of Milan; and Niccolo Piccinini and Fortebraccio, a nephew of the elder Braccio, were chiefs of the former*. To one or other of these schools all the various bands of condottieri attached themselves but that of Sforza from his expected marriage with Bianca Visconti was in most favour, yet Sforza became the General of Florence while Piccinino remained faithful to Milan! About the beginning of 1435, and during the gonfaloniership of Cosimo de' Medici Giovanna II. Queen of Naples died and left her kingdom to Regnier Duke of Anjou, but Alphonso or Alonso King of Aragon then in Sicily and invited by the barons, attempted to get possession of the throne. The lords of Anjou's party demanded Visconte's assistance and under his auspices a Genoese squadron defeated and captured Alphonso, his son, and nine galleys in July off the island of Ponza after a battle that lasted from sun-

* Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 12.

rise to sunset, the captives were sent by Philip's desire to Milan and Alphonso soon convinced him that his true policy was to keep the French out of Italy instead of assisting a prince of that nation to establish himself there. Philip became his friend and gave him his liberty without ransom, at which the Genoese, who hated Alphonso, were so indignant that they revolted from Milan, and under Francesco Spinola succeeded in regaining their independence: an offer of their alliance was made to Florence who accepted it, and by so doing A.D. 1430. irritated Visconte and induced him to listen to some propositions of Rinaldo degli Albizzi *. His anger was further inflamed at seeing Genoa admitted in May 1430 as a member of the confederacy by both Venetians and Florentines and supplies of men furnished her in consequence: this breach of the league was justified in the opinion of those states by Philip's attack on Alphonso, because according to its conditions he was not to interfere in Neapolitan politics †.

But wheresoever lay the right, war seemed inevitable especially as Rinaldo was at Visconte's elbow exasperating him against Florence, where as he asserted, a strong party of malcontents were ready to support him: Philip had already sent Piccinino against Genoa with subsequent instructions to harass Florence as if on his own account in order to encourage the malcontents, and this republic opposed Cristofano da Lavello the Milanese commander, first by Taliano and afterwards, when Piccinino entered Lucca in the beginning of October, by Sforza himself. The latter's head-quarters were about Pontedera; Piccinino demanded a passage for his troops towards Naples where Luigi del Vermo had already gone, which being refused he haughtily threatened to force his way; whereupon Sforza advanced and being nearly matched they remained watching each

* Costanzo, Ist. di Napoli, Lib. xv. and xvi., vols. ii° and iii°.—Muratori, Annali, Anno 1435.—Neri Capponi, Comm. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1184.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 3.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 6.

other until the twenty-second of December when Niccolo began hostilities by scouring the country, taking Santa Maria di Castello, and finally investing Barga. Florence who at the pope's request had hitherto avoided breaking the peace, now sent troops to defend that place and repulsed the Milanese with some dishonour to their general under the walls of Barga in February 1437 *. This victory at which Neri Capponi commanded the Florentines under Sforza, forced Piccinino to retreat and saved the mountain of Pistoia from devastation.

A.D. 1437.

In April with nine thousand men and a hundred war-cars and bombards he invested Santa Maria in Castello and planting one of these engines (which cast a stone of 530 lb. troy) against it he in four shots brought down a strong tower from its base and the place surrendered. Piccinino hearing of these things and seeing his troops wasted, retired to Lombardy where he was more wanted against the Venetians †. After this Sforza and Neri Capponi made rapid progress: Camaiore, Massa, Viareggio, Carrara, Moneta, Lavenza, and Sarzana successively fell: the siege of Monte Carlo was begun and the place soon reduced; all the Lucchese contado was wasted; the citizens of Lucca wanted provisions but were stout in defence of liberty; and neither the destruction of their corn, the cutting down of vines olives and other fruit trees, the plunder of cattle, nor the conflagration of villas and hamlets could induce them to think for a moment of yielding. Meanwhile Venice had taken up the war in Lombardy, but disgusting her captain the Marquis of Mantua he resigned, and strong applications were made for Sforza: this was an awkward demand; for trusting to the Venetians finding work for Visconte beyond the Po the Florentines had resolved to renew their designs on Lucca whose reception of Piccinino gave them a fair pretext; but the real reason of this design was Cosimo's ambition to illustrate his government with some-

* Neri Capponi, pp. 1184-45.—Ammirato, Lib. xx., p. 8.
† Neri Capponi, p. 1185.

thing as brilliant and beneficial to Florence as the conquest of Pisa under that of the Albizzi*.

Sforza who had long aspired to something above a mere condottiere became intimate with Cosimo by whose support and the favour of his promised bride he hoped to share some of the Duke of Milan's territory if not his whole dukedom, as the latter had no legitimate issue: knowing however that fear alone brought forth the promise and that fear alone would secure its performance, he determined by an apparent union with Visconte's enemies, but not drawn too closely, to keep himself in a formidable position with respect to Philip, yet free enough to change when his own interest required it. For this reason he had stipulated with Florence not to cross the Po, and she was more unwilling to part with him at the moment of her projected conquest because there was reason to believe that Venice was against it: nevertheless the Florentines, fearful of driving her to a reconciliation with Visconte who would then assist Lucca, determined to comply when Sforza had reduced all the Lucchese strongholds; but to gain his own consent was also necessary, and this he was urged to give in a private letter to the Seignory, by which Venice would be quieted and Sforza himself not bound to more than he wished, as a private promise could never annul a public treaty. His conquests therefore continued uninterrupted until the whole Lucchese territory was subdued and Lucca itself so closely blockaded that all supplies were stopped: in October he met the Venetian deputies at Reggio, refused to make war beyond the Po and returned to Tuscany: here however he became equally restive and refused to stir against Lucca unless Florence procured his arrears of pay due from Venice: Cosimo from his extreme popularity in that capital was chosen as ambassador on this service and he went the more willingly from his anxiety to conquer Lucca†.

* Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 9.—Ibid, pp. 8, 10, 11.
† Ammirato, Lib. xxi., pp. 9, 10.

But though honoured as an exile he failed as an envoy because Venice had already dismissed Sforza for refusing to pass the Po and denied him his salary: the Florentines however would have paid this as well as their own share, but he also wanted the support of Venice and she refused both: Sforza then threatened to join Philip whose offers were large, and again was Cosimo employed, but with as little success, so he repaired to Ferrara and entreated the pontiff's interference. Giuliano Davanzani succeeded him, but Venice was still inexorable and Sforza joined Visconte in March 1438. In the following April he was the mediator of a peace between Florence, Milan, and Lucca by which the latter was left free with a circuit of six miles and Florence kept her conquests. The duke was moreover bound not to meddle with the affairs of Tuscany or Romagna by his agreement with Sforza, who feared for his own dominions in the latter neighbourhood; but by a stratagem of Piccinino and an affected quarrel with Philip the pope was deceived, and Visconte's troops overran all that country his object being to insulate the Venetians and recover Brescia and Bergamo*. Florence and Sforza, whom Philip had been deceiving throughout, were astounded at this sudden outbreak, and in 1439 their connexions with Venice were renewed and preparations made for a fresh war against the Duke of Milan †. This went on languidly until Neri Capponi persuaded Sforza to cross the Po in June when a brisk trial of skill took place between him and Piccinino: Sforza was baffled in his attempts to relieve Brescia but gave his adversary a complete discomfiture at Tenna on the Lago di Gardo in November. Piccinino escaped in a sack carried on the back of a strong soldier and then with wonderful activity rallying a few troops, fell suddenly on Verona and captured the town: three citadels remained and Sforza promised to recover it if only one held

A.D. 1438.

A.D. 1439.

* Poggio, Lib. vii., pp. 208, 9, 10.—Neri Capponi, p. 1187.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 13.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxi., pp. 13, 14.

out: he performed this promise, and the allies retired to winter quarters *.

Cosimo again became gonfalonier of justice for the two first months of 1439, and his official dignity was made illustrious by the removal of the pope and council of Ferrara to Florence: Eugenius had taken up his residence at Bologna in 1436 and could no longer bear the insolent encroachments of the council of Basle which in 1437 had not only summoned him to appear before it as a culprit but in November 1439 created Amadeus Duke of Savoy, (who had abdicated the throne and turned monk) a pope under the name of Felix V. Previous to this however, having been driven by the plague from Ferrara, and Bologna being in Piccinino's hands he removed to Florence accompanied by the Greek Emperor John Palæologus and the Patriarch, with a large suite of ecclesiastics, for the purpose of healing the schism between the eastern and western churches: the Arminians were at the same time reconciled and many cardinals created from all nations to correct the baneful influence of an anti-pope †.

In 1440 Philip resolved to defend Lombardy by carrying war beyond the Apennines into Tuscany and La Marca; to this he was urged not only by Piccinino but by Rinaldo degli Albizzi's strong representations of the internal state of Florence which he assured him was ready to receive the exiles with open arms if strongly supported ‡. Besides this, the Patriarch of Alexandria, Giovanni Vitelleschi who governed the pope, a cruel unscrupulous man notorious for his ambition, love of war and licentiousness; commanded his army with absolute power throughout the ecclesiastical states. This man commenced an intrigue with Visconti apparently through hatred of Sforza who had defeated him in La Marca; and because both Vene- AD. 1440.

* Poggio, Lib. vii, p. 225.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 18, &c.
† Muratori, Annali.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., pp. 16, 21.
‡ Cavalcanti, Lib. xiii., cap. ii.

tians and Florentines had incurred his anger; the latter by her conduct towards Albizzi, and the other exiles whose safety he had guaranteed; but he had also cheated both Venice and Florence and hated them for complaining to Eugenius who showed him their letter which Vitelleschi was not the man to leave long unanswered. He therefore offered to join Piccinino with all his forces, and as Poggio asserts and others believed, even intended to murder Eugenius himself and seize on the keys of Heaven*.

These things determined Philip; and Piccinino accordingly crossed the Po in February with six thousand horse to form a junction with Manfredi of Faenza and then proceed into Tuscany. Neri Capponi and Davanzati heard of this movement at Ferrara on their way to Venice and gave instant notice of it to government: the Seignory referred them to Sforza whose presence was anxiously desired; but still their instructions were not to urge him against his own judgment as Florence could manage without†. The two ambassadors joined the Venetians in pressing him against his own inclinations to remain, as Gattamelata his lieutenant had lately become paralytic and there was nobody to succeed him. Sforza in fact knew and suspected Vitelleschi and therefore trembled for the fate of La Marca and his other possessions; and the conjuncture became still more dangerous by the defection of the Malatesti who joined Piccinino after receiving the pay of Florence for a thousand men-at-arms; moreover, the Marquis of Este's son joined Philip Visconte with all his followers although already paid by Florence, scornfully telling her officers that they might deduct the amount from his father's shares in their national funds. To make up for all this, intercepted letters in cipher were brought, or said to have been brought from Montepulciano which revealed though indistinctly all Vitelleschi's treachery, and Luca Pitti

* Muratori, Annali.—Poggio, Lib. vii., pp. 228-9.
† Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 22.

was instantly despatched to Rome with orders from Eugenius to Antonio Redo captain of Saint Angelo to take him alive or dead. This was no easy task, but it was effected by stratagem and the cardinal received a deep wound during the scuffle: while the surgeon was in the act of probing it Luca Pitti as Ammirato tells us, struck the instrument into his brain and he expired on the spot! Others say he was poisoned, and others again that his life was taken differently; but he was promptly removed in some manner, to the great relief of his holiness and of Florence*.

The pope's physician who was patriarch of Aquilea then took charge of the army which instantly marched to the defence of Tuscany with six thousand men of all arms and this event decided Sforza, so, with some remaining anxiety for La Marca, he detached a thousand men-at-arms under Neri Capponi to reënforce the Florentines. Meanwhile Niccolo Piccinino after a repulse in the mountain pass of San Benedetto as he attempted to enter Tuscany by the Montone, tried the equally strong one of Marradi which might have been as easily defended; but Bartolommeo Orlandini who commanded there with absolute power as Florentine commissary fled shamefully before him and left all the Mugello and even Florence itself open to his arms†. Excursions were immediately made as far as Fiesole and over those hills to Ponte-a-Sieve and Remoli; and some soldiers even crossed the Arno, so that cattle and peasantry were driven in to Florence for shelter.

While the country was thus exposed all within Florence was quiet, the lower classes were attached to Cosimo and the interests of the great were identified with him, so that the malcontents did not raise a finger although Rinaldo and almost all the

* Nardi, Stor. Fior., Lib. i°, p. 11.—Cavalcanti, Lib. xiv., cap. iii.—Muratori, Annali.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 23.—Poggio, Lib. vii., p. 228-9.

† Neri Capponi, p. 1193.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., pp. 23, 4, 5.—Poggio, Lib. vii., p. 229.—Cavalcanti, Lib. xiii., cap. i., ii., iii., iv.—Macchiavelli, Lib. v.

exiles were in Piccinino's army*. Nevertheless apprehensions of every kind were rife in the city, and it was at first believed that the peasantry and rural town-population would through rebel influence deliver the strong places into his hands, because throughout those classes any appearance of civic commotion spread great joy and they considered themselves the more fortunate in proportion as greater discord reigned in the capital. Their popular saying was, that "*War amongst the wolves gave quiet to the lambs*"†. Such was the gentle rule of that republican government over its rural subjects! Again, a rising of the internal malcontents if Piccinino were to attack the town would have proved a serious and almost irreparable disaster and hence, though terror reigned in their hearts, the government assumed a firm aspect and did not even show the force they really had in the city lest the people should discover their alarm and the disaffected gather courage to revolt. Arms were denied with equal firmness to the people lest the sword, if once drawn, might not so easily return to the scabbard: those conscious of undue severity were now most cowardly while the lesser tyrants acted with prudent boldness.

Micheletto was recalled from La Marca; Pietro Gian-Paulo Orsini posted at the gate of San Gallo; Niccolo Gambacorta da Pisa who had repulsed Piccinino at San Benedetto, and Pietro Torello occupied Borgo San Sepolcro, and every other measure of present safety was adopted by them. Cosimo de' Medici prepared for the worst and expected a second exile. "It is better for the republic," said he, "that I should go, than subject the citizens to such peril." And so strong was this resolve, that Neri Capponi, according to Cavalcanti, (though the former does not, himself mention it) hastened before daylight to the gate of San Gallo which being shut, he called out

* Ammirato, Lib. xiii., p. 24.

† "La guerra de' lupi genera pace intra gli agnelli."

to the warder to tell Orsini from him that he must be careful of his own honour * and the people's safety for Niccolo and all his men were near the gates; but above all things he was to have a hundred horse ready for Cosimo's security alone. And this alarm, says Cavalcanti, arose from Cosimo's consciousness of the wicked deeds that had been done by others in his name, and which he was either constrained unreservedly to approve, or shut his eyes upon; for all his remonstrances were met by the fact that these people had restored him to his country and that *he* was beholden to *them*, not they to *him*; and thus was he compelled to sanction in silence their wicked doings. The alternative was plain to an honest man, but Cosimo did not choose to take it; for ambition in him was stronger than virtue, independence, or humanity. Audacity, fear, and severity, divided public opinion and made confusion in their councils: some wished to imprison all suspected persons: others to come to terms with the enemy; others again to restore the exiles and send Piccinino away in peace: there was no unanimity until Puccio Pucci, seeing the danger, rose and in an animated speech restored spirit and confidence to the government; and Pietro Paulo Orsini was finally appointed to the supreme military command†.

Tired of this trifling warfare and seeing no prospect of signalising himself in the Mugello the Milanese general accepted an invitation from Francesco di Battifolli Count of Poppi to occupy the Casentino, and passed into that province with his whole army. This branch of the Guidi family had almost always been staunch adherents of Florence, and Francesco himself was at the very time her commissary for the Casentino: he was an intimate friend of Rinaldo's, and yet was said to have betrothed his beautiful daughter Gualdrada to Cosimo's son Piero: after having consented to this marriage, Cosimo as

* Orsini was at this moment very unjustly suspected by the citizens.

† Cavalcanti, Storia, Lib. xiii., cap. vii.; Lib. xiv., cap. xxiv.

we are told, was persuaded by Neri Capponi and other citizens; who dreaded such alliances with feudal lords and strangers; to break the engagement, and so made a bitter enemy of Count Francesco di Poppi *. However this may be his reasons were private and his anger led to dishonour and to ruin.

Bibbiena and Romena were soon captured by Piccinino, the latter with retaliative cruelty, and all the Casentino occupied. San Niccolo on the Solano, a tributary of the Arno near Poppi, was closely besieged and every intercepted fugitive thrown back into it from the "*Briccole*" or Catapults; but under the gallant Morello it held out for one-and-thirty days and only surrendered on the twenty-fifth of May when every means of defence were exhausted.

Morello had been a poor inhabitant of Poppi where his mother was still living at the time of the siege: he had also been wild in youth, had disobeyed the law, and became a banished man; but attracted by the military pomp which he beheld in all directions, like the first Sforza he quitted the mattock and gave himself to arms. His reputation must have been good, for the "Ten of War" had intrusted him with the protection of San Niccolo and a garrison of a hundred and twenty men, and he performed his task most gallantly. At length the Count of Poppi bethought him of an expedient. He sent the aged mother of Morello bound in cords and chains as a culprit close under the walls of San Niccolo and offered her life to him with honours, and rewards, and restoration to his country, if he would only surrender the castle. In this trying moment the young man gave a noble yet fearful answer: he felt that no private interest should shake his allegiance to the country or obstruct his duty as a soldier, and said; "Life is short even "to the young, to the old still shorter; but a good name is "everlasting; wherefore I choose eternal fame rather than "prolong the few remaining days of an aged mother. Go back

* Ammirato, Lib. xxi., pp. 24, 25.

" and tell the Count that I would rather he continued to live " an unjust and cruel man than I should be called a traitorous " and a cowardly one "*.

The defence of this post gave full time for preparation in Florence, and Piccinino after wasting the summer without any real advantage; after failing to acquire the Seignory of Perugia, and to get possession of Cortona by treachery, and Città di Castello by force; was suddenly recalled into Lombardy where Sforza's success overcame all Visconti's opposition. The papal army had now arrived under Lodovico Patriarch of Aquilea and the whole allied force amounted to about nine thousand men of all arms nominally commanded by Piero Gian-Paulo Orsini, who had orders not to molest Piccinino in his retreat. The latter was eager for battle to counterpoise a recent victory gained by Sforza between Orci and Soncino on the fourteenth of June, after having relieved Brescia and crossed the Mincio, besides numerous other advantages over the Milanese general†.

The Florentines had occupied Anghiari a town about four miles distant from Borgo San Sepolcro on the opposite side of the Tiber and on a low range of hills dividing the valleys of the Sovara and that river. Piccinino was aware that but little discipline existed in the enemy's army, and much disagreement between the three commanders, Micheletto Attendolo, Orsini, and the Patriarch of Aquilea: he also knew that it was their custom to remain under arms until noontide while their foraging parties were out, and then to disperse and amuse themselves without any attention to discipline: wherefore he settled to advance in the afternoon accompanied by two thousand of the inhabitants of San Sepolcro who joined for the sake of pillage.

On the twenty-ninth of June as Micheletto was reconnoitreing the country towards Borgo San Sepolcro he observed a light

* Neri Capponi, Comment., p. 1193. Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 234.—Sismondi —Cavalcanti, Lib. xiv. cap. xv. vol. vi., chap. lxix., p. 384.
† Corio, Parte v., folio 339-340.—

and distant dust which gradually increasing convinced him that Piccinino was at hand; immediately giving the alarm he hastened with his own division to occupy a bridge in front of the position which he foresaw would be the principal point of contention. This bridge crossed the torrent Gora * whose banks were steep, and protected the whole front of the allies: Micheletto's promptitude gave time for arming and placing the troops in order of battle: their position was on the right bank of the torrent to the right and left of Micheletto who remained as a centre. Orsini occupied the latter station with the Florentine army and commissaries Neri Capponi and Bernardetto de' Medici. The Patriarch and his army formed the right wing, and the infantry were posted along the steep banks of the Gora to protect the flanks in case the enemy's cavalry succeeded in crossing it beyond them. This disposition was scarcely completed when Piccinino's advanced guard charged furiously on the bridge but were driven back with great gallantry: more troops came up, charge after charge followed with various success; sometimes the allies were borne completely back and the battle raged in the plain; at others the Milanese were driven amongst ditches and inclosures on the other side where they necessarily fought at a disadvantage, and could not handle their cavalry in large bodies; while on the Florentine part all had been fairly levelled before the action, so that when driven back they could quickly form in masses and charge the unformed chivalry of Milan; most of the conflict was on the latter ground. The battle was obstinately contested for four hours until towards sunset, when the Milanese fatigued with the march and conflict, and overcome with heat, began to flag: then suddenly a strong wind rose from the hills which blowing clouds of dust in their faces obstructed both breath and sight and they gave way: retreat soon became flight, the

* Sismondi says the Tiber, but this could not be; because that bridge is only a mile from the Borgo San Sepolcro; and no other writer speaks of the battle being *on the Tiber;* but *under Anghiari.*

whole army dispersed, and Piccinino under great difficulties escaped with a thousand horse to San Sepolcro.

The success of this battle, fought on the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, was attributed to those apostles, and Piccinino's defeat to his desecration of that holy day: according to Neri Capponi twenty-two out of twenty-six chiefs of squadrons were captured, with four hundred men-at-arms and fifteen hundred and forty citizens of San Sepolcro, besides three thousand horses. Macchiavelli startles us by asserting that only one man was killed and he by a fall; and his great authority Cavalcanti, barely alludes to the action without giving any details; but others with more probability say that sixty were killed and four hundred wounded, besides the loss of six hundred horses on both sides; and moreover that many fell by artillery *. This victory in consequence of the usual want of discipline was not immediately followed up and Piccinino escaped: prisoners were pillaged, ransomed, and released, by which that general recovered some of his finest veterans, and in despite of all the exertions of the Florentine commissaries, seconded by Orsini alone, the army remained intent on securing its plunder and no great hurt was done to Visconte but Tuscany was saved; for if this battle had been lost that state must have remained at the mercy of Piccinino †.

Rinaldo degli Albizzi and the other exiles seeing their hopes blasted dispersed into various countries; he retired to Ancona, thence went in pilgrimage to Palestine and died suddenly at Ancona after his return while assisting at the festivities of his daughter's wedding. The Florentines soon reduced all Casentino to obedience, delivered over Borgo San Sepolcro to the pope, besieged and took Poppi, and sent Count Francesco with his whole family and as much property as they could carry

* Cagnola, Storia di Milano, p. 54.—Gio. Cambi, p. 229.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 380.—Cavalcanti, Lib. xiv., cap. xxxiii.—Macchiavelli, Lib. v.—Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 231, to p. 236.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 20 to 28.—Neri Capponi, p. 1195.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 29.

to wander the wide world over after having enjoyed that fief for five hundred years *.

The victorious army then entered Romagna, where Malatesta had returned to his ecclesiastical allegiance and alliance with Florence, and took Dovadola, Bagnacavallo and Massa Lombarda. Philip began once more to talk of peace to which all the other parties were inclined, and ever put his daughter into the hands of the Marquis of Ferrara as a pledge of his sincerity to Sforza †. Nevertheless peace was yet distant, and the death of Cosimo's brother Lorenzo was the only event that signalised the remainder of the year 1440.

A.D. 1441. Meanwhile Sforza mistrusting Philip's peaceable language did not relax his warlike attitude, nor was Venice more anxious for a peace while her general was adding conquest to conquest. Piccinino's arrival and rapid organisation of a new army of ten thousand men stopped Sforza from passing the Adda; he therefore attacked the Marquis of Mantua and took Peschiera, a fortress of great value to Venice as it ruled the communications between Verona and Brescia. While at Venice in February 1441, he was suddenly called away in the midst of negotiations for peace by the defeat of a detachment of his army at Chiari by Piccinino, who simultaneously spread a report that Sforza being suspected by Venice would speedily suffer the fate of Carmagnola; on this Sforza hastened to reassure his army but his best officer Sarpellione had already gone over with three hundred men to the enemy. As soon as the season permitted he crossed the Oglio and besieged Martinengo a fortress that cut off all communications between Brescia and Bergamo; here Piccinino out-generalled him; for throwing a thousand men into the beleaguered town he took up a position about a mile distant which completely blocked up Sforza's line of retreat and was far too strong to be forced. Sforza was thus

* Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 31.—Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 237.

† Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 238.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 32.

caught in a trap and shut up with thirty thousand souls in his camp; his troops being principally heavy-armed cavalry could do little against Piccinino's strong intrenchments; provisions began to fail; the foragers were forced to spread to an immense distance and generally fought for or lost their provisions; every hour of every night new alarms occurred; the soldiers were half-starved and exhausted in mind and body; even Sforza himself was sinking into despondency and prepared to force his way out at all risks, when in the middle of the night Antonio Guidabona di Tortona a friend of his own and confidant of Philip's was unexpectedly announced as the harbinger of safety *!

Piccinino on seeing that his prey was secure had written to Philip and reminded him that after long and faithful service and severe wounds he had not in his old age, cut and crippled as he was, even a single castle as a recompense or place of repose: but that now as he had brought the war to a crisis the enemy's captain and army being in his hands and that Philip might make himself king of Italy; he asked for the lordship of Piacenza and other places, and if not deemed worthy of this, demanded his dismission. A request, made at such a moment and in such a manner exasperated Visconte, who was already excited by the insolent claims of his other captains: Louis de San Severino asking for Novara; Louis del Verme for Tortona; Taliano Furlano, for Bosco and Figaruolo in the territory of Alexandria, and all the rest expecting similar rewards. Wherefore sooner than submit to such exactions Visconte preferred the advancing and honouring of Sforza and making peace with his allies, the Venetian and Florentine republics †.

* Cagnola, Storia Milanese, Lib. iii°, p. 56.—Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 241-2.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 34-5.

† Corio, Stor. Milan., Parte v^a, folio 342.—Cagnola, Stor. Milan., Lib. iii°, p. 57.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vi.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 35.—Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 241-2.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 392.

After relating these facts Antonio Guidabona at once offered Sforza on Philip's part, his daughter Bianca in marriage; the delivery into his hands as pledges of sincerity several places which had been taken by Piccinino beginning with Martinengo; and constituting Sforza himself arbiter of the peace which was now proffered. This was a joyful change for that general who unhesitatingly accepted the conditions and in the morning announced to the Venetian Procuratore Malipiero at his levee that a truce was made, and convinced him of the imprudence of waiting for the senate's approbation to conclude the treaty. The result was that Sforza received the beautiful and accomplished Bianca Visconte in marriage with Cremona and Pontremoli as her portion; and in November 1441 dictated a peace as umpire in the town of Capriana where the ambassadors of the belligerent states had assembled. The Duke of Milan, Venice, Florence, and Genoa; the Pope and the Marquis of Mantua were all reëstablished in their former rights and boundaries as they existed before the war, with some exceptions to the disadvantage of the two latter who were the only parties discontented with Sforza's decision. The pope was angry at not recovering those places in Romagna which Visconte held, yet Sforza was at one moment going to cede Bologna, but Philip would not consent because as was believed, he wanted it as point of dispute thereafter. Thus another period of blood and desolation terminated, and the peasant's son mounted a step nearer to the throne of Milan *.

Cosimo was now complete lord of Florence; she had been in the market and he purchased her; but those who had no benefit from the sale and saw their liberty torn from them brooded in silence over their fate though they feared to give a tongue to their reflections; they were indignant at seeing the whole power of the commonwealth wielded by one alone, although without ostentation and under the forms of liberty; from one

* Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 242.—Sismondi, vol. vi., p. 394-5.

alone, says Bruto, proceeded laws, judgments, magistrates; a single man regulated the public rights, the scrutinies, the municipal affairs, war, peace, and everything: he overawed the patriotic with the terror of his punishments and gained the bad by his rewards; and all this lest a free voice should be heard amongst a free people to demand the reëstablishment of ancient privileges. But in the midst of all, what moved them most to anger was the calm and specious show of moderation and modesty which belied those virtues, in order to hide enormous power and blind the intellects of deluded citizens.

Thus Cosimo remained lord of the city, and beyond it no name was heard but his; yet to temper this dominion, he not only overlooked all the wickedness of his adherents and became a sure rewarder of their services but affected no unusual state that could tell of bygone liberty and offend his countrymen: no guards, no mace-bearers, no pages, no attendants, no following in the public places; no courtiers were seen to frequent his palace or await his movements: Cosimo went forth a private citizen, alone, unattended, confident; but he had first cleared his way by the sweeping besom of destruction *. His fault was in the *determination to enslave his country;* after this he had no other course. But not content with thus influencing the republic, he was jealous of any other man's popularity; and especially that of Neri di Gino Capponi, a citizen of marked reputation, high actions, great popularity, and more intellectual power than Cosimo himself †.

They were the two greatest of Florentine citizens, but Capponi was somewhat honest, and not rich; yet in addition to his father's reputation his own force of character had preserved a distinguished place for him under both the Albizzi and the Medici: he was not bound to the one; he paid no court to the other, but became in a manner formidable and necessary to both. He had mixed much in war, had often led the armies to

* Bruto, Lib. iº, pp. 81, 83. † Cavalcanti, Seconda Storia, cap. xvi.

victory, and possessed the confidence and affection of the soldiery. Individually, he was probably beyond even Cosimo's reach but not his fear or enmity, and the sword of faction fell upon his friends. Amongst these, strange as it may appear considering his ruthless character, was Baldaccio d'Anghiari constable or commander of the Florentine infantry, a celebrated and faithful soldier of the republic and one of great powers of mind and body. The union of such men was much too dangerous for the ascendant faction to tolerate, because if Neri were inclined to oppose Cosimo and be drawn for gonfalonier of justice, with Baldaccio's assistance he would have been able to effect its downfall. This question was secretly discussed and Baldaccio's death resolved upon: whether Cosimo were cognisant of the fact or not is unproved; Cavalcanti says no; but so strong a measure of injustice committed against so distinguished and powerful an officer, whether approved of or not by Cosimo could hardly have been decreed without his knowledge.

The cowardly Bartolommeo Orlandini was at this time gonfalonier of justice and had never forgiven Baldaccio for both writing and speaking his mind on the disgraceful flight of the former at Marradi when he left that pass open and his country exposed to the mercy of Piccinino; wherefore his private vengeance was made a political weapon with the whole power of government to wield it. Orlandino wrote to his brother in the mountain of Pistoia to send him a gang of ruffians who would have no compunction in shedding blood; they were promptly sent, and he concealed them in his chamber.

Baldaccio had come to Florence about private business and was instantly requested to attend at the palace but having heard various accusations spread about the town to his disadvantage he became suspicious; it was said that he had plundered the town of Sughereto, which belonged to Piombino, and laid the blame on the Seignory; that in so doing he had injured the lady of Piombino who had complained to the Florentines;

and that he had engaged to serve the pope in La Marca against Sforza whom Cosimo supported through everything: these and other stories were rife before and after his murder; but the obvious reason of it seems to have been political expediency and private vengeance. Whatever were his sins Baldaccio became suspicious, and applied to Cosimo himself for advice on the prudence of answering the requisition of the Seignory. "Cosimo," says Cavalcanti, "as one who was unaware of the insidious snare; said that obedience was ever praiseworthy, due to the dignity of the republic, and considered as the greatest virtue of citizens." This decided Baldaccio's fate: he repaired to the palace and was there received by Orlandini who took his hand and led him towards his own chamber whence suddenly sprang forth the murderers and soon despatched him: his body was thrown from the window into the captain of the people's court where the head was chopped off by order of the Seignory: the dead man was then declared a rebel and his moveable property seized by government, but afterwards restored at the supplications and tears of his wife Annelena who begged for it with an infant in her arms: the child soon died, she retired broken-hearted from the world, and finally turned Baldaccio's residence into the convent that still bears her name.

His body remained exposed for several hours, and people wondered, and some were indignant; but the murder made more noise in the rest of Italy than in Florence where a sentence of rebellion was promulgated which though an unusual and scandalous proceeding against the dead, was attended by little explanation and fewer inquiries; for this people, who fancied they had liberty and were so jealous of the phantom, believed as a matter of course that Baldaccio must have committed some secret crime, and were content thus to place life and property at the mercy of their rulers. This struck a hard blow on the party of Neri Capponi and humbled all his adherents as much as it exalted the Cosimeschi; for excepting

the unlikely engagement to serve against Sforza all the other reasons for his death become frivolous when the military license of that period is considered: they might haply have occasioned a public process if expedient for faction but not a secret death; and to private vengeance and party hatred alone can Baldaccio's murder be reasonably attributed *.

Dissatisfied as Eugenius was at losing Bologna which was not to be restored for two years, he became more so on learning that by secret articles between Sforza and Piccinino the latter was permitted to retain all the church property he held in Romagna and to get possession of Perugia and Siena if he could; and Sforza was guaranteed a similar freedom of action both as regarded the church and his own Neapolitan possessions. The pontiff therefore threatened war which Cosimo exerted himself to prevent, and effected a reconciliation between him and Sforza which was however of brief duration, for Regnier Duke of Anjou brother of Louis III. of Naples being liberated from the Burgundian prisons repaired to that city where his wife Isabella had hitherto not only maintained some ground against Alphonso, but gained the hearts of all by her wise and benevolent rule; yet after great struggles he lost the whole country except Naples itself which was still defended against all the efforts of his rival, his only hope being in Sforza whose estates had been sequestered †.

A.D. 1442.

Alphonso exerted his influence with Philip to prevent this, and Visconte finding that no persuasion could detach Sforza from Florence and Venice, became angry and gave Eugenius to understand that the moment was come for recovering La Marca; at the same time offering the services of Piccinino during the whole war. The pope, who was as restless and quarrelsome as Visconte himself, immediately broke with Sforza not-

* Orlando Malavolti, Lib. ii°, Parte iii*, fol. 30.—Cavalcanti, Seconda Storia, cap. xvi.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vi.—Giov. Cambi, p. 234.—Boninsegni, Lib. ii., p. 75.—Ammirato, Lib. xxi., p. 37.—Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 7.—Pignotti, Lib. iv., cap. x., p. 85.

† Giannone, Storia Civile di Napoli, Lib. xxv., cap. vii.

withstanding Cosimo's mediation and formed a close alliance with Piccinino whom he made gonfalonier of the church and the latter repairing to Perugia arranged the invasion of La Marca. Florence resolved if possible not to infringe the peace, nor did the occupation of Città di Castello and the expulsion of her commissary alter this resolution; but learning that Piccinino had captured Todi and that Naples had been taken by treachery she again exerted herself to restore tranquillity while Regnier was personally soliciting her aid along with that of Eugenius to recover his kingdom. Both remained undecided, awaiting the turn of events in La Marca where Piccinino had already added Belforte, Sternano, and Montefortino to his conquests and where Sforza from numerical inferiority was unable to keep the field. The Florentines supplied their ally with money and his forces augmented; he marched to encounter Piccinino, but when tidings of battle were hourly expected letters from Bernardino de' Medici informed the gonfalonier that he had reconciled the contending chieftains.

Being now easy about La Marca Sforza directed his troops towards Naples but was instantly compelled to recall them in order to face Piccinino who had unscrupulously broken the peace and taken Tolentino. This event destroyed Regnier's last hope and he returned to Provence; a second treaty was soon after signed and again broken by Piccinino who took Gualdo and stormed Assisi in the month of November with great barbarity. This rejoiced the pontiff whose opposition to the policy of Florence rendered his longer residence there disagreeable, and he departed in January 1443 fully bent on the conquest of La Marca: he was soon on good terms with Alphonso who wanted his natural son Ferdinand to be made legitimate and if possible acknowledged as his successor*. A.D. 1443.

The combined armies were to act against La Marca where

* Giannone, Lib. xxvi., cap. ii., Storia Civile di Napoli.

Alphonso was to command in person, and this so alarmed Sforza that he sent repeated applications for assistance to Venice and Florence endeavouring to convince both that the next step after his expulsion from La Marca would be the division of Italy into three parts in concert with Visconte, and thus they would end the contest. But both republics hesitated until a revolution in Bologna decided them: Francesco Piccinino who commanded there for his father Niccolo, became fearful of Anibale Bentivoglio's influence with the citizens and took an opportunity of arresting him while hunting; he was sent a prisoner into Lombardy but escaped and appearing secretly in Bologna caused an instantaneous revolt with the imprisonment of Piccinino and the restoration of Bolognese independence.

Florence and Venice were immediately applied to for assistance and after some hesitation reënforced the insurgents with two thousand men: a Milanese force under Luigi del Verme was repulsed by Simonetto the Florentine general, the citadel was taken and razed to the ground, and in the month of July Bologna was publicly received as an independent member of the league*. Piccinino enraged at this disaster, but without help, wreaked his vengeance on the enemy: he instantly joined Alphonso at Norcia and with a combined army of twenty-four thousand men ravaged the country and captured Visso. Sforza with only eight thousand was unable to face such numbers and therefore retired to Fano after reënforcing all his garrisons: here he proposed to remain with his son-in-law Sigismund Malatesta until winter dispersed his enemies, but eagerly renewed his applications to Venice and Florence for assistance. The latter alarmed at this fierce invasion under such a monarch as Alphonso, sent ambassadors to learn whether Philip still held to the league or if he considered the troops sent to assist Bologna as a breach of it: they found Visconte lamenting that he had pushed his son-in-law so hard and willing to reconfirm

* Cavalcanti, Seconda Storia, cap. xxxviii.

his alliance; this was publicly made known at Florence on the eighteenth of October amidst great rejoicings, which were increased by his having previously despatched an embassy to Alphonso entreating for a cessation of hostilities.

The engagements of this king with Eugenius prevented any attention to the request and Sforza between capture, disaffection, and revolt lost about fourteen walled towns with four of his oldest commanders, and, as he imagined, his staunchest friends, amongst them his own brother-in-law Troilo Orsini! So loosely did honour, or friendship or the ties of kindred sit on the hearts of Italian leaders in those melancholy times! Even Malatesta began to waver when Alphonso appeared in the vicinity of Fano with the avowed purpose of besieging it. But just at this moment another embassy arrived from Milan; the Venetian and Florentine succours were at hand; Fano was strong and well provided for a siege, and winter rapidly approaching: Alphonso therefore gave up the project and moved to Naples while Niccolo Piccinino hastened to cross the allies' line of march and prevent their junction with Sforza. The latter thus relieved quitted Fano, followed the enemy, and ere he could encounter the allies overtook and defeated him in a pitched battle on the fifth of November at Montelòro in the contado of Pesaro, where he would have soon ended the war had not winter put a stop to all further operations for that year*.

Amongst the traitors to Sforza were Piero Brunoro and another, whom he resolved to punish, and did it in the true character of the age: he sent letters to them by a messenger whom he knew would be intercepted, declaring that then was the moment to execute their plans according to agreement †. Alphonso in whose army they enjoyed a high command imme-

* Zohanepetro Cagnola, Stor. Milan., Lib. iv., p. 61, &c.—Corio, Storia Milan., Parte v., folios 345, 347.—Muratori, Annali, An. 1443.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 39 to 44.—Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 243.

† Cavalcanti, who never spares Sforza, asserts that he did not pay his officers, but rather, when they became importunate, got rid of them by violent deaths, and that Troilo Orsini and Brunoro were really sent by him to

diately arrested both, gave their followers up to be pillaged by his own soldiers and sent the chiefs themselves off to a dungeon in Valentia where they languished for ten years. But Piero Brunoro had a steady friend in one of those who when the heart is once engaged but seldom fail. He had taken away from the Valteline a young girl named Bona who followed him through all his wars in soldier's attire and even fought by his side wherever his duty called him. At the moment of his imprisonment she set out to visit all the princes both of France and Italy to whom he had ever been known, and procured letters from them in his behalf to Alphonso, who being of a generous and even chivalrous nature was at last touched by her devoted affection and granted Piero's liberty. But not satisfied with this, she managed so well as to procure him a command in the Venetian army with a salary of 20,000 ducats, for which services he married her and she continued to combat by his side until he was killed at the siege of Negropont in 1466; after which she fell sick and died on her return to Italy, it was supposed from affliction for his loss*.

The description of them by Porcelli an eye-witness in 1453 after Brunoro's liberation, and when serving under Jacomo Piccinini, is, that Brunoro was then old, squinting, and paralysed on one side; and that Bona who accompanied him carried a bow in her hand a quiver over her shoulder and a helmet on her head: that she was little, old, yellow, and extremely thin, but sincere, and faithful to her lover, and crossed the ocean several times to see him and procure his liberty†.

The blow so surely aimed at Neri Capponi through Baldaccio d'Anghiari, severe and effectual as it was, did not quiet the alarms of Cosimo: some bolder spirits now began to talk and much too freely, of his government; discussions were even

A.D. 1444.

do mischief in Alphonso's camp on purpose to ruin them. He calls Sforza the "*Morte e sepoltura d' ogni ciascun uomo.*"—(Vide *Seconda Storia*, cap. xix., p. 173.)

* Cristoforo da Costa, Elogi delle Donne Illustri, apud Muratori Annali, Anno 1443.

† Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 11, note, and Rer. Scrip. Ital., tomo xxv., p. 43.

taking a reprehensive character and an immediate check became necessary. Ten years had elapsed since the Cosmeschi usurped the government; the legal duration of the Balià had expired; their enemies were showing unwonted energy, and they themselves were unwilling to relinquish a power which was in fact dictatorial; a power placed by the laws above all law; a power that in a really free country would truly represent the people's sovereignty; but composed, as it generally was in Florence of the creatures and followers of an ascendant faction, became a mockery, and a tyranny of the most revolting kind, a tyranny of the many with all their variety of passion, enmity, and vengeance: and with this constantly recurring despotism, the Florentines wrapped in the folds of imaginative liberty still dreamed that they were free!

The Seignory and colleges with about two hundred and fifty citizens were invested with the supreme authority of a Balià composed entirely of partisans: they remodelled magistracies, gave the power of choosing the Seignory to a select few; removed Ser Filippo Pieruzzi from the office of Reformations, sent him ten miles from Florence; substituted a creature of their own; prolonged the exile of banished citizens; committed some to prison; transported others; deprived the adverse *Accoppiatori* of all honours; rendered many incapable of office and imposed new taxes: thus with a strong arm and a heavy blow they exalted themselves, cowed the suspected, and humbled the pride of their enemies *.

As soon as Cosimo had thus cleared the way, by lopping each plant or flower that crossed his path while trampling on every obstacle to his ambitious progress, he and his party turned their attention with greater security to external affairs. Sforza was still hard pressed on every side; his demands for money and succours were most urgent and Picci-

* Boninsegni, Mem. di Firenze, Lib. iii., p. 79.—Cambi, Storia, p. 246.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 44.—Machiavelli, Lib. vi.

nino was again in the field when Philip in compassion ordered a truce to be made and recalled him on pretence of more urgent matters: the fiery old warrior well acquainted with Visconte's wiles was not deceived and at first refused to obey, but finally returned to Milan leaving his son Francesco in command of the army. Sforza pushed to extremity by the closing round of hostile forces, according to Cavalcanti treacherously broke the truce, sought out Francesco, defeated and took him prisoner after a severe and at one time doubtful action at Monte d' Olmo which soon after capitulated. This bettered his fortune but hurt his reputation, and by the advice of Cosimo and Visconte he seized the occasion to offer peace: Eugenius whose affairs looked gloomy came to terms without difficulty; his legate and general were prisoners, Sforza was making rapid progress, and his great hope the old Piccinino died at the Villa di Corsico near Milan of a fever, (or some say poison) brought on as was believed by chagrin for the loss of Bologna and his son's new disaster*.

The preliminaries of peace were therefore signed at Perugia in October and the definitive treaty soon after by a commission of three cardinals with Cosimo de' Medici and Neri di Gino Capponi. By this each party was to retain what they actually possessed in La Marca with certain exceptions. The league with Perugia and Venice was then renewed for ten years; and thus terminated another period of wild war in Italy; but the respite was brief, for a union of barbarity and uncontrolled power makes sad havoc of mankind†. When a licentious indulgence of our worst passions is confined to private men, the evil is comparatively small and generally recoils upon the doer; but when whole states or princes break away from humanity and plunge the world in war, society is shaken

* Cavalcanti, Seconda Storia, cap. xl. vol. ii., p. 223.

† Corio, Stor. Milanese, Parte v^a^, folio 350.—Gio. Pietro Cagnola, Stor. Mil., Lib. iv., p. 64.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 45.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vi.—Muratori, Annali.

to its base and universal misery soon or late will cry aloud for vengeance.

The new amity between Sforza and Philip was short, and an accident presently embroiled them: Piccinino's death left Visconte without a general and he fixed his regards on Ciarpellione or Sarpellione, Sforza's most valuable officer, but one who had once before deserted him. A secret negotiation commenced between them which coming to Sforza's ears both angered and alarmed him for Ciarpellone was the depository of his secrets, and he well knew Visconte's dangerous character; whereupon he first imprisoned this officer and then hanged him in the autumn of 1444 on the charge of conspiring against the life of his general. Philip vowed vengeance for the deed, but both Venice and Florence rejoiced for they dreaded the friendship of two such kinsmen. Sigismondo Malatesta lord of Rimini and Sforza's son-in-law, was also indignant at Alexander Sforza's having been advanced to the lordship of Pesaro instead of himself, and therefore stirred up the pontiff with Alphonso and Philip, all willing agents, against him. Visconte in particular eagerly seized this occasion of settling his own dispute with Sforza and urged Eugenius to make Sigismondo his general with the prospect and promise of recovering Bologna. Neither was Alphonso slow to move, for the city of Teramo and several barons had revolted and given themselves to Sforza; and in Bologna too, apparently the result of Visconte's promise, a tragedy was soon after performed that made a becoming prelude to the war. A.D. 1445.

The families of Bentivoglio and Canetoli or Ghisilieri, the first in Bologna, were connected by marriage; but the former was most popular and bore unlimited sway: this was too much for the latter's jealousy and Annibale de' Bentivogli being invited to hold Francesco Ghisilieri's child at the baptismal font was unscrupulously murdered by that family after the ceremony. The people rose in their wrath and massacred the Ghisilieri and

their followers guilty and innocent, man, woman, and child, all that could be recognised, while Visconte who had excited the commotion despatched Taliano Furlano to support the murderers *. He came too late to follow up the conspiracy but instantly made war on the territory; Venice and Florence poured in their squadrons to protect the city; Visconte's forces daily augmented and the whole country swarmed with armed men, yet little was this year effected beyond the security of Bologna and the usual devastation of the land. Meanwhile Alphonso, Eugenius, Malatesta of Cesina, Sigismondo of Rimini, Taliano Furlano, besides other chiefs and their numerous armies all closed round Sforza until he was driven for shelter into Pesaro, and at the end of November notwithstanding Cosimo's repeated subsidies Jesi was the only town that remained to him of all his possessions in La Marca †. In addition to these misfortunes the papal malediction was twice launched forth against him; and when Bianca brought forth her first child Eugenius exclaimed that a second Lucifer was come to perplex mankind: so indignant was this pontiff against Sforza that to make Florence smart for assisting him he commenced a negotiation with Alphonso in hopes of directing his anger upon her, which was not without its consequences in the succeeding year.

A.D. 1446.

Unsatisfied with the ruin of Sforza in La Marca Philip attempted to seize Cremona and Pontremoli; but Venice defended the former and Florence the latter, and thus was war in full flame over the greater part of Italy: Romagna, Lombardy, Tuscany, La Marca, were all blazing with hostile arms and the kingdom of Naples itself was far from tranquillity. The

* Whoever wishes for the horrible details of this affair will find them in Cavalcanti: they are a melancholy example of the frenzy of faction; but as Florence supplies a sufficiency of this ware we do not think it expedient to load our pages unnecessarily with the crimes of other countries.

† Cavalcanti, Seconda Storia, cap. xlvii. —Cagnola, Lib. iv., p 65.—Corio, Parte v., folio 351.—Muratori, Annali, Anno 1445.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 48.

Venetians under Micheletto Attendolo achieved a signal victory over Francesco Piccinino at Cassalmaggiore in the latter days of September and this frightened Visconte into supplications for peace which Venice proudly rejected, continuing her triumphant course until a second victory in November opened the whole territory of Milan to her arms, and devastation was carried up to the very gates of the capital *.

After the former defeat Philip wrote to Alphonso, the pope, and even to the king of France for assistance, and implored Sforza in affecting terms not to abandon an old and sightless father in his extremity: from the first prince, after concluding a hasty truce with the latter, Philip had received the succour of four thousand horse, a part of which immediately deserted to the Venetians: Sforza had also received a strong reënforcement of Florentine troops, but no pay either from Florence or Venice and was doubtful about his proceedings. He was no less exasperated at Philip's attempt on Cremona than dazzled by the magnificent proposals of Venice, who offered him the dukedom of Milan with the perpetual command of her armies, if he continued the war in La Marca and prevented Alphonso from advancing to the aid of Visconte †. On the other hand he was dissatisfied with the confederates' irregularity of payment which crippled his force and movements, for the Florentines having no longer any fears of Milan were becoming less attentive to Sforza ‡: thus between his plighted faith, his prospects from the league, and the prayers of his father-in-law, he remained in considerable perplexity; he could not help suspecting that concealed poison lay in the golden cup so frankly exhibited by Venice, and his choice was soon made when intelligence reached him A.D. 1447. of that republic having imitated Philip's example without his

* Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 52.—Muratori, Anno 1446.—Corio, Parte v., folio 355.—Cagnola, Lib. iv., p. 70.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 52.

‡ Ibid., p. 53.

rights by making a treacherous though unsuccessful attempt to get possession of Cremona *.

Sforza had assembled his army at Cotignola ready to pass into Lombardy when he suddenly heard of Visconte's death which had taken place on the thirteenth of August 1447. This was a hard blow, for his troops were in arrears of pay and both Florence and Venice were now his enemies, the former however more in form as an ally of Venice than in reality, for Cosimo alarmed at her conquests was far from desiring the ruin of Philip by that republic. It had been always the policy of Florence to curb the Visconti but not destroy them; and both for her own benefit and that of Italy at large the aggrandisement of Venice by Philip's destruction would have been unsound and dangerous policy †.

Sforza could expect no assistance from the new pontiff for he feared Alphonso; Cosimo, however friendly, could not quit the league to succour him; wherefore his only hope was in the resolution of the Milanese who now as a declared republic could scarcely dispense with him if they persevered in the war with Venice. Resolving then to brave every danger and trust to fortune for the result, he gave the word to march, passed through the states of Bologna, Modena, and Reggio, and halted on the Lenza, whence he despatched his offers of assistance to the new republic of Milan ‡.

On Philip's decease that city had resumed its freedom, but was divided into monarchists and republicans, these last differing in their choice between Alphonso and Francesco Sforza; the latter in right of his wife and his own adoption by Philip; the former by testamentation; but the republicans prevailed

* Cavalcanti decidedly acquits Philip of treachery in attempting Cremona. He had given it in *pledge* until Bianca's portion should be paid, and when he offered to pay *that*, Sforza very unjustly refused to give it up; upon which Philip attacked it; and whoever denies his right, says Cavalcanti, will deny all right. (*Vide Seconda Storia*, cap. l., lix.)

† Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 53.

‡ Gio. Pietro Cagnola, Stor. Mil., Lib. iv., p. 72.

and that form of government was instantaneously established. Other cities took different courses, the people of Lodi and Placentia giving themselves to Venice while Pavia and Parma declared their independence: Sforza retired to his own city of Cremona where he concluded an engagement with the Milanese to be their general with the same allowances and conditions as were offered by the late duke including the city of Brescia, which he was to exchange for Verona whenever he could recover those places from the Venetians: parties were thus matched but though belonging to the league Florence apparently took no active part in the war now about to rage in Lombardy with more violence than ever *.

The reign of Pope Eugenius IV. was a scene of constant war and vexation; the former proceeding from himself, the latter from the Council of Basle which still continued and tormented him with characteristic virulence; but the hand of death relieved him from these troubles on the twenty-third of February 1447. He was succeeded ten days after by Tommaso da Sarzana cardinal of Bologna, a man of great learning and virtue but of obscure birth, under the name of Nicholas V. This pontiff was of a mild pacific character but firm, and had been so much beloved at Bologna that on his election that city voluntarily returned to its allegiance †. He dislodged Alphonso from Tivoli which the latter had suddenly occupied during the vacancy, set the French monarch against the anti-pope Felix of Savoy and purchased Jesi of Francesco Sforza for 30,000 ducats which completed the restoration of La Marca to the church. He soon after acknowledged the legitimacy of Prince Ferdinand of Aragon which Eugenius had established, and confirmed Alphonso on the throne of Sicily "*on this side of the Pharo;*" for the island kingdom had never acknowledged the pope's feudal supremacy since the Sicilian Vespers ‡.

* Macchiavelli, Lib. vi.—Muratori, Annali.—Corio, Parte v^a^, folio 356 to 359.—Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 56.—Gio. P. Cagnoli, Lib. v., p. 74.
† Cavalcanti, Seconda Stor., cap. lxxxiii.
‡ Giannone, Lib. xxvi., cap. iii.

We have said that Eugenius IV. had infused into King Alphonso's mind his own dislike of Florence, and though he had passed away the venom remained; so that in the month of September 1447, the movements of that prince pointed at Tuscany. An invasion soon followed on pretext that the peace of Italy was disturbed by Venice, who neither could do this nor wage so fierce and successful a war against Milan without Florentine assistance; and that duchy having been bequeathed to him by Philip he was thus compelled to vindicate his rights; but if Florence would only withdraw from the Venetian alliance he was her firmest friend. Such were the reasons alleged for the justification of a war already begun without previous explanation or remonstrance.

His proposition was debated in the senate and rejected; a Balià of war was named, an army assembled, for though Alphonso was an able and experienced general with fifteen thousand men actually on their territory there was no timidity or indecision in the government and he commenced hostilities, after trying in vain to seduce Siena from her alliance, by marching through the Maremma into the lands of Volterra and occupying Pomerancia. We shall not follow the course of this war through all its channels until finished by Alphonso's repulse on the walls of Piombino, because however right it may be that national and cotemporary historians should indulge in military details, to the general reader and especially the alien, they are not only useless but wearisome. Still when they are strongly romantic, like this assault of Piombino, or didactic, or of universal interest from their great scale and important consequences; their casual introduction may form a not unpleasing relief to the dryness of historical narrative. In all other cases a very slight sketch of the military operations with the simple exhibition of results to show their practical bearing on national policy is sufficient; and as a clear and useful narration of the details of war can scarcely be expected from any

but professional men, it may in general be wiser not to attempt them.

Pomerancia was taken in November 1447. Castiglione della Pescaia, of which the existing town would appear to have then only constituted the citadel, followed in March 1448. A.D. 1448. Rinaldo Orsino who had married Caterina d'Appiano Lady of Piombino, warned by the fate of Count Francesco of Poppi at once shut his gates against Alphonso and with Florentine aid was enabled to maintain himself during the whole time of the Aragonese monarch's occupation of that country: a drawn battle was fought off his shores between the Aragonese and Florentine squadrons, and desultory warfare with no tangible result except the occupation of Castiglione, continued in the Maremma until the autumn of 1448, when Alphonso gathering up all his forces which had been much thinned by the marsh fevers of that unhealthy district, led them on himself to a desperate assault on Piombino. There was here no breaching, or mining, but much artillery both by sea and land; it was a chivalrous noonday assault by escalade; the women and children of Piombino were marshalled below to supply their husbands their fathers and their brothers with refreshments, while Rinaldo his soldiers and all the male inhabitants glittered on the lofty battlements; lime, boiling oil, scalding water, and melted lead, were collected in abundance and showered upon the assailants who attacked boldly and were as gallantly resisted: Alphonso was conspicuous throughout the day leading and cheering his men to victory: many acts of desperate valour great prowess and warlike devotion were shown on both sides in the attack and defence of that little town, acts that would have graced a mightier enterprise; until at last the King of Aragon was forced back with diminished numbers by the unshrinking valour of the besieged.

Rinaldo Orsini was triumphant; for apprehending the approach of the Florentine army Alphonso withdrew, and leaving a garrison in Castiglione della Pescaia continued his retreat to

Ansidonia, which appears to have been then inhabited though now overgrown by wild arbutus with a forest of flowering shrubs mantling its grey Cyclopian battlements. Thus ended the King of Aragon's invasion of Tuscany: he continued his retreat to Gaeta and there embarked for Naples with promise of a second visit to Florence in the ensuing spring *.

A.D. 1449. Before the Duke of Milan's death Pope Nicholas V. endeavoured without effect to restore peace to Italy and the negotiations were in fact completed but not ratified in consequence of that event; the Milanese desired to finish them but Venice in all the flush and insolence of conquest refused to listen, and the more confidently because Florence was too much occupied with King Alphonso to interfere in their behalf. This was not displeasing to Sforza for it made him more necessary to Milan and his first act in despite of ancient rivalship was to give his hand to Francesco and Giacomo Piccinino; then taking the field he received the submission of Pavia on condition of not giving it up to the Milanese: this was a palatable restriction, for Pavia was an acquisition admirably adapted to Sforza's circumstances, nor, says Macchiavelli, was he deterred either by fear or shame from breaking his plighted faith, "for great men only consider it shameful to lose, but not to gain by treachery." He excused himself to the Milanese by asserting, perhaps truly, that parties being divided within the town if the offer had not been accepted either Savoy or Venice would have had Pavia, and they although angry and clear-sighted enough as to his real motives, were obliged of necessity to succumb: they indulged too in a fallacious hope that when once relieved from their present troubles they would be able also to get rid of him. He was at that moment necessary for their protection not only from Venetian aggressions

* Muratori, Anno 1448.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vi.—Orl. Malavolti, Lib. ii., Parte iii^a, folio 37.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 59.

but against Genoa and Savoy, both acting for the Duke of Orleans in right of his mother Valentina Visconte the sister of Philip: but these enemies were of little moment and soon repulsed by Sforza, leaving the more formidable Venetians commanded by his kinsman Micheletto Attendolo, to be coped with. Placentia was next besieged and in despite of all the efforts of Venice taken by assault in November 1447 with revolting cruelty and every species of barbarism; the nuns alone having been saved from dishonour by his orders *.

Spring beheld the revival of hostilities under a darker and more terrible aspect, and the Milanese, perceiving that Sforza only made use of them for their ultimate subjugation, sued humbly to Venice for a peace while that haughty republic became more arrogant at every application; yet her hardest conditions would have been accepted had not a sedition amongst the populace put an end to all further negotiations.

Sforza meanwhile made rapid progress, and Milan hoping for better terms from Venice ordered the investment of Lodi as soon as Caravaggio fell; for here both armies had already assembled, one to take, the other to save that important town, whose surrender was expected to seal the destiny of the former. On the fifteenth of September 1448 the Venetians attempted to surprise Sforza in his trenches when one of the most memorable battles of that conflicting age was the consequence: Sforza triumphed, and out of twelve, or according to Cambi, sixteen thousand cavalry scarcely fifteen hundred escaped to tell the tale of their discomfiture. The lands of Brescia were soon overrun and siege laid to that city; the Venetians demanded and received succours from Florence as a member of the league, but her heart was with Sforza: perplexed between his design on Brescia which was to be his own, and the well-founded suspicions of the Milanese

* Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 248.—Corio, Pietro Cagnola, Storia Milan, Lib. v., Stor. Mil., Parte v^a^, folio 365.—Giovan. p. 83.

who enjoined him to reduce Lodi the moment Caravaggio surrendered, this general became doubtful what part to take for both the Piccinini had secretly thwarted all his plans and now marched with four thousand cavalry to attack Lodi in obedience to the commands of Milan.

What Venice lost in the field she generally regained in the cabinet, and being well aware of Sforza's ambition and Milan's jealousy, and that peace with her was for the moment an acceptable object to both; this from fear, that from interest; she at once offered her hand to Sforza, confidently looking forward to Milan's hatred preventing his ever being received there as master. Hoping therefore to step in and ultimately reap the fruits of this anticipated conflict a treaty was concluded with Sforza in October 1448 by which all he had taken in the war was to be restored to Venice, and if Milan were conquered he should keep no more than Philip Maria Visconte possessed at his death.

The rumour of this treaty silenced the shouts of victory at Milan and realised the worst fears of the citizens; rejoicings died away, lamentations broke from every tongue and curses everywhere followed the name of Sforza. Nevertheless that chief maintained a steady course until his victorious ensigns fluttered under the walls of Milan. Expecting every moment to be deserted by Venice he was prepared for the event, and after the reduction of Crema which completed all her political arrangements dependent on the alliance of Sforza, she fulfilled his anticipation to the letter by making a separate peace and treaty of alliance with the Milanese in the autumn of 1449 *.

Florence during the latter part of these transactions had no scruple, notwithstanding the opposition of Neri Capponi, in supplying Sforza with money both publicly from the national

* Corio, Parte v., folio 371 to 393.—Gio. Cambi, p. 262.—Muratori Annali.—Macchiavelli, Lib. v.—Cagnola, Stor. Mil., Lib. v.

funds, and privately in fuller measure from Cosimo who strongly encouraged him; and in the beginning of 1449 she sent a resident ambassador to his camp as a mark of her friendly approbation, the King of Aragon intent on other things having left her in present tranquillity *. The treaty between Venice and Milan retarded Sforza's operations for a season; but he was now too strong and had been too well prepared for such an event to be easily baffled, wherefore by a steady and skilful management of his means he contrived, in spite of all the force and cunning of Venice to starve the Milanese amongst whom he had once a strong party, into a surrender of their city and liberty.

On the twenty-sixth February 1450 he was proclaimed Seignior and Duke of Milan, the cherished object of his ceaseless labour, consummate prudence, and deep-seated ambition.

Sforza lost no time in concluding a close alliance with Cosimo and the Florentines against Venice and the King of Aragon, who hated Florence for her intimacy with the house of Anjou. He at once joined the Venetians in an effort to shake the new-made sovereign from his unsteady throne and Florence immediately despatched Piero de Medici, Neri Capponi, Luca Pitti, and Dietisalvi four of her chiefest citizens, to mark the public approbation. It was indeed no light matter (whatever might have been the state of domestic parties) to be at once relieved from a dynasty of able, powerful, and hereditary enemies ever seeking her destruction, and see it replaced by a friendly ruler with congenial interests who mainly depended on their alliance and support. A.D. 1450.

About this time also another embassy was sent to make one more attempt at securing the friendship or at least the forbearance of Alphonso, who with outstretched arms brought the strength of Aragon and the Two Sicilies to bear at once on Italian

* Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 249 — Macchiavelli, Lib. vi. — Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 62.

politics, and paved the way for princes yet unborn to crush the freedom and independence of Italy.

Alphonso's terms were hard but finally conceded, he retained Castiglione della Pescaia and the island of Giglio, and was acknowledged lord paramount of Piombino with a small tribute of a golden cup from Caterina de' Appiano now a widow; for the brave and chivalrous Rinaldo Orsino after being honoured and rewarded by Florence expired during the negotiations *.

Although Francesco Sforza's exaltation was generally popular yet one man of great capacity and influence decidedly and strenuously opposed it; but whether from faction as averred by his adversaries, or from honest patriotism, the characteristic of his race, is now uncertain. Neri Capponi deemed it inconsistent with the interests of his country and the safety of Italy that Milan should thus have fallen, because ample dominion united to splendid military talents was ever dangerous in a bold ambitious man, and if as a simple Count, Francesco could hardly be endured, he would become absolutely intolerable as a sovereign prince. Wherefore this distinguished citizen judged it more safe and beneficial that Sforza should have remained in a comparatively private station, and Lombardy be divided into two republics which would neither unite to molest others, nor be strong enough single-handed to injure the rest of Italy. He therefore voted although unsuccessfully against sending any assistance or taking any other part in the contest.

On the other hand Cosimo's party accused Capponi of opposing the grant, not from any belief in his own reasoning but merely from the apprehension that with Sforza's public and private support Cosimo's prepotency would become monstrous. Neri Capponi *did* probably think such danger possible, but with his distressing experience of Cosimo's actual authority he could scarcely contemplate much augmentation of it; especially

* Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 63.

when he himself, the ablest, the most popular, and most influential citizen in the commonwealth could not with all his own power and reputation withstand him. But Neri like all the Capponi was a staunch republican though not a low democrat and therefore believed that the multiplication of free states was better for those actually existing than the establishment of despotism whose evil working in the rich and powerful Lombardy Florence had so long and painfully experienced. He was consequently true to his political principles in objecting generally to the establishment of a despot whether it were Sforza or Cosimo, but in the then existing circumstances as far as we know them, Cosimo's own reasoning would now seem the more plausible.

He declared there was a great lack of wisdom in those who imagined that the Milanese could maintain their liberty; because their luxury, their social relations, their ancient factions, their mode of life, their very character, their habitual and hereditary subservience to successive tyrants, altogether not only rendered them incapable of satisfactorily working any form of self-government but were directly opposed to it. Wherefore it followed that their choice lay between Francesco Sforza as duke, or the Venetians as masters; and no man was supposed to be so silly as to doubt whether a strong friend or a most powerful enemy were the better neighbour.

Looking at the broad question divested of party prejudice, an aggrandizement of Venice by the vast addition of the Milanese dominions would have given to that grasping republic a dangerous preponderance; but the substitution of an able and aspiring soldier for a crafty but unsteady politician; however safe for Florence at the moment; was not better adapted to steady the great political balance than the sway of a clever and ambitious but unmilitary sovereign, even though a Visconte; and the only real security against Sforza was his trouble and difficulty in consolidating a new and usurped authority; a task most likely to prevent any ulterior schemes of ambition *.

* Macchiavelli, Lib. vi.

The extinction of the male line of Visconti was in every respect an event of vast importance to the Italian peninsula, and powerfully influenced the subsequent history of Europe by generating consequences that are yet in active operation. In Lombardy it occasioned a disputed succession, and opened golden prospects to the house of Orleans and the crown of France; but it also prepared the northern, as Alphonso's conquests did the southern channels, for those sweeping billows of transalpine power that from time to time have rolled their angry surges over the fairest provinces of Italy, and still submerge it!

COTEMPORARY SOVEREIGNS.—The only changes are, Portugal: Edward I. to 1438; then Alphonso V.—Scotland: James I., murdered at Perth 1437; James II.—German Empire: Sigismund until 1437; then Albert II. in 1438 to 1439; Frederic III. 1440; Pope Eugenius IV. to 1447; then Nicholas V. —Greek Empire: John VII. to 1448, then Constantine XI., *the last Emperor*, to 1453, when Constantinople was taken by Mohamed II. with a force of three hundred ships and three hundred thousand men.

CHAPTER II.

FROM A.D. 1450 TO A.D. 1465.

BEFORE recommencing a narrative of wars unmitigated by any touch of humanity, unanimated by generosity, undignified in their cause, cruel in their action, base in their objects, and devoid of that grandeur or even didactic interest which despite of crime is so deeply felt in the exploits of Hannibal and the deeds of Rome: before recommencing these it perhaps may be well to offer as marked a sketch as our materials allow, of the state of Florence during the first sixteen years of Cosimo's government; but more especially after every effort at the free and effectual expression of political opinion was crushed by the stringent measures of 1414. A.D. 1451.

The favourable sentiments at first so extensively formed of Cosimo de' Medici became greatly modified when the battle of Anghiari by blasting the hopes of every exile removed all fear of a new revolution. From that moment fresh and unusual license was allowed, not in words alone but in all the insolence of power; in rapine, corruption, and every shameful act destructive of justice and morality; so that an administration at first so popular began to displease many even of Cosimo's own adherents and disgusted every other citizen. Cosimo and Neri di Gino Capponi were beyond comparison the two leading men of Florence; the latter esteemed the wisest, the former immeasurably the richest; for Neri seems to have inherited so much of his father's honesty as never to have fattened on the substance of the commonwealth. Next to these came four

principal citizens of the ruling party, who were not so scrupulous, and all devoted to Cosimo: the first was Puccio Pucci the boldest, ablest, and most eloquent of his friends without whom Cosimo never stirred a finger: he had been advanced from an inferior class and was enriched by the command of public money. Alamanno Salviati was the next, and said to be a grasping selfish man who cared as little for the public good as for his own reputation, provided that his desires were gratified. Alessandro de' Alessandri bore a more honest but haughty character: vain of his imagined merits, and not without some; believing that his natural position was amongst the loftiest of the state he frowned at any infringement of his will. Neroni Dietisalvi was at this time supposed to be the least intriguing of the four, but after Cosimo's death he also proved that there was no deficiency; and was a man of penetrating genius with great influence in the republic. Besides these there were Ugo Buondelmonti a nephew of Esau, despot of Romania, who enjoyed considerable reputation; then came Agnolo Acciaioli, a young citizen of parts and character already spoken of, who however finally attached himself to Ranieri or Neri Capponi and at last quarrelled both publicly and privately with the Medici. Luca Pitti next appears as a man of great audacity but moderate talents and bad character, who became from peculiar circumstances conspicuous in Florentine history though now better known by the palace which bears his name than through any merit of his own either as a man or a statesman *.

There seems to be a retributory character inherent to wars that torpedo-like strikes back on the makers and revenges the injury they inflict: those of Florence fomented by Cosimo and his faction were gradually undermining her strength, for while she increased in fame and territory she diminished in force

* Cavalcanti, Seconda Storia, cap. i., ii., xvi. — M. Bruto, Storia, Lib. ii., p. 109; Lib. iii°, p. 299.

solidity and real power. The incessant pecuniary demands of Sforza, who thus supported by Cosimo was far from popular, exasperated the people to that degree that many secret discussions were held by the Cosimeschi to adopt protective measures against the tumults which were apprehended in consequence. Sforza's unjust appropriation of ecclesiastical property in the conquest of La Marca was condemned by a great body of the people who were unwilling either to abet the sacrilege or augment his possessions by the ruin of their own. This war therefore, coupled with much individual and general oppression arising from it, began to irritate the public mind and numerous but secret meetings of the ascendant faction including what was called their "*Caorsini*" was summoned. These "*Caorsini*" were certain parasitic instruments of faction possessing two useful qualities which enhanced their value and rendered them universally acceptable to Cosimo's party: one was poverty, which unaccompanied by principle, kept them ready for the basest acts; the other was an eager desire to live by ways and means that most men would spurn, but for which they cared not. Numbers of these Caorsini were mingled with the crowd of Cosimo's followers, and although of a certain rank and outward reputation, and with civic rights; were needy, insolent, mean, partial, and rapacious; men who never checked the gratification of their passions and to whom justice and injustice, integrity or dishonesty were equally indifferent. Self-will displaced reason, self-love honesty, and any extremity of evil was cheerfully endured sooner than forfeit the pleasures of personal vengeance, while good was measured precisely by the extent of their own enjoyments*. This band of citizens was mainly composed of a class of business agents then and for centuries after much used in Florence under the general name of "*Sensali*" or brokers: they were the middlemen who managed all contracts, bargains, sales, and marriages; and entered as a

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. xvi., xx.

third party into almost every transaction of common life amongst all classes of citizens. Their business was in fact analogous to that of modern agents and attorneys, but embracing the whole range of agency from the common bargains of the market-place to low political intrigues; for as their diversified affairs brought them in contact with every rank they were admirably adapted, in the hands of artful statesmen, to feel the public pulse and direct great masses at the pleasure of their employers. By means of these agents the leaders of Cosimo's faction secretly summoned their adherents to a nocturnal meeting in Saint Mark's church where Giuliano Davazani an able man, addressed them on the alarming state of the public mind as it affected their own stability; and from this meeting proceeded the despotic measures of 1444*.

The city was then pregnant with commotion, apparently amongst the poorer classes or "*Plebe*" but under the manipulation of higher malcontents of Patrician rank; there was famine also; the people lived on vetches and other pulse imported by the state and which, strange to say, brought a greater price than wheat. "The markets," says Giovanni Cavalcanti, "were exceedingly dear, not so much from the price of wheat as the scarcity of common grain which forced the people to grind vetches and these were wont to fetch a higher price than wheat"†. All this gave energy to discontent, or probably caused it; for the poor are seldom turbulent when they have labour and food: but the agitators wrought on a suffering population by identifying their misery, and justly too, with useless war and reprehensible government; a war undertaken as was said only to favour the joint ambition of a foreign adventurer and a powerful native citizen.

The comparatively liberal conduct of the Rinaldeschi at Cosimo's expulsion had left in the election-purses a sufficient number of Cosimeschi to effect his recall, and even Cosimo him-

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. xx. † Ibid., cap. xx. and xxxi.

self searching and implacable as he was, had not yet weeded out all his opponents. The knowledge of this power though feeble, produced a certain confidence in the higher malcontents, who from present dissatisfaction and change of sentiments joined with the older antagonists of Cosimo; and they were a far more formidable party than the mere *Plebe*. Murmurs were heard of the disgrace of being subject to an unworthy tyrant and a peasant of Cotignola whose mother was a low woman of reprehensible character, and yet this adventurer they said did not even condescend to request, but commanded the republic to do his bidding.

The old nobles also joined this cry. "We were before bad," said they, "but are now worse; for under the empty shadow of "a boon we are almost ruined: they offered us honey and now "they give us gall, the bitter fruit of unjust and insupportable "taxation which only secures us a dungeon and the insolent "outrages of official myrmidons." There were moreover loud complaints of corrupted justice: citizens were interdicted even from pleading in the public courts against the injustice of government and the oppressions of its officers; and when causes were at last decided the parties were commonly ruined unless they happened to have offered the first or the largest bribe. It was said that many vexatious judgments were given by secret enemies of the government on purpose to create dissatisfaction, and by others to revenge their own private injuries with impunity: but the common cry was, "We are the servants of Fran- "cesco Sforza, not the companions of King Alfonzo as we ought "to be; yet he has offered to guarantee us peace for 10,000 "florins a year, and if war be ever necessary, to wage it at his "own cost, provided we will only withdraw our aid and favour "from the count"*

No historian but Cavalcanti mentions these terms, but if accepted they would probably have changed the fate of Italy

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. xxi.

by avoiding the dangerous aid of France: without Florence Sforza, driven from La Marca, could scarcely have conquered Milan, and Neri Capponi's project of two Lombard republics might possibly have been realised, or Alphonso's power have been firmly established in that country, which by securing the Spanish ascendancy would at least have prevented Italy from becoming the coliseum of transalpine gladiators.

We have said that in consequence of the agitated condition of Florence a new Balià with a thorough weeding of the magistracies was resolved on in 1444. This Balià was made up of men who were sure supporters of any measures that the party dictated, and though appearances were slightly preserved by the cautious admission of a few adverse, or at least not friendly citizens, they were either so few that no alarm was excited, or so irresolute as to insure their floating with the general stream. But in the councils were still many secret enemies, peaceable but timid men who foreseeing disaster yet feared to buffet against the storm *.

Thus strengthened there were no bounds to the extravagance of the Cosimeschi: Puccio and others enriched themselves by open or secret plunder; the public funds became corrupt or discredited; dividends were paid to the powerful, refused to the weak or only paid in billets, which being worthless in the market were purchased at a fourth and a fifth of their value by secondary officials who through their political influence afterwards recovered the whole amount from the treasury. The marriage portions of young girls, secured on public faith in the Funds, were refused on the plea of state necessity; sincerity and honesty were utterly abandoned and even any pretension to those virtues was laughed to scorn: gain, no matter how, was the all-absorbing passion, and "more honest men were mocked and ridiculed than culprits menaced." Asperity universally increased; comparisons with other times and other rulers were

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. xxii.

sullenly drawn, and the governing faction was pronounced to exceed all its predecessors' in wickedness. This partly proceeded from the admission of many vindictive men to power all hot with long-nursed wrath against their adversaries; vengeance was necessary; nay, almost imperative; a vengeance not condemned, but cherished as a virtue in gentle blood; and as indispensable to family honour in those wild days of barbarous violence as the duel is in our own; yet the time may not be far distant when *our* posterity will read of the latter with the same painful feeling that we ourselves now do of the former *.

Thus the sweet savour of Cosimo's early rule had evaporated; men of nothing were seen suddenly in office and as suddenly enriched, no man knew how; but all felt that taxation pressed on life, tyranny on freedom, knavery on honesty, and misery on all. In this state of things the period for a fresh scrutiny approached, but the angry citizens gave their secret votes to all the kinsmen of the exiles and to suspected persons, for *their* conduct was now felt to have been more tolerable than the corruption, injustice, and peculation of the Puccini. Such conduct was too dangerous, too bold, too independent, for the latter; they called this scrutiny the "*Lily*," because that flower though fair to the eye has a fetid odour and the scrutiny although bright with illustrious names, to them smelt strongly of corruption†. The image is somewhat forced but Cosimo's deeds were not poetry, and the whole election was annulled against all law and precedent: several families which formed part of it were banished or otherwise persecuted, and ten Accoppiatori, or as Cavalcanti denominates them, "Ten Tyrants," were appointed ‡.

This Decemvirate was empowered to preserve its authority

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. xxiii.

† The allusion is to the Iris Lily, the Florentine emblem.

‡ The names of nine of them are preserved by Cavalcanti, viz., Tommaso Soderini, Francesco Orlandi, Alamanno Salviati, Manno di Temperano, Domenico Michele, Guariante, Ugolino Martelli, Nerone Dietisalvi, and Niccolo Buonvenni.

from scrutiny to scrutiny, that is from three to five years, and to choose every magistrate from the gonfalonier downwards previous to holding the mockery of a public drawing. Thus all that the exasperated spirit of the people had accomplished was placed by Cosimo's influence under the talons of this omnipotent authority and the exhausted citizens sunk back into despondency. The Accoppiatori drew whom they pleased not whom the people elected; and their choice was a selection of subservient tools and furious partisans, of low birth and base character; men of yesterday; rural upstarts who crowded the city and shouldered the pride and honours of the ancient race; this alone made them hateful, for an aristocratic spirit was ever strong in Florence and pride of ancestry whether of the feudal families or Popolani was still generally respected. There was a common saying of the time that "a wealthy woman and a prosperous upstart were the two most insufferable things on earth;" wherefore the virtues of these last, if they had any, were not likely to be seen or appreciated: like the rest their acts were evil and their mischief deep*, for its noxious influence percolated through every official stratum until one mass of corruption pervaded the commonwealth unchecked by shame by conscience or remorse. To supply this waste taxes were multiplied; twenty-four rates were levied within the year, and in

* Domenico Michele, one of the new Accoppiatori, is especially designated as one of these, and his picture as painted by Cavalcanti gives us the outward and visible signs of a hypocritical knave in the middle of the fifteenth century at Florence. "Proud, iniquitous and false, a public peculator and a receiver of bribes: he is tall and thin; with a womanish voice, lean shanks, compressed in the waist, narrow shouldered, a cunning sharp look, a grizzled and scarce beard, a blotched face, his gait measured, and his chest forced forward more than is necessary for his height. All these tokens show that in those things for which men are usually denominated knaves this man surpasses every one."—The portrait may still be recognised without travelling so far as Florence. (*Vide Caval., Seconda Storia*, cap. xxv.) Giovanni Corsini was another imbiber of the public nourishment, and with freer action as gonfalonier in 1445. But he filled himself in secret and was only known by his gradual expansion, while Puccio's was a bold, open, usurious accumulation of national funds in his own person. The one was a bladder, the other a snow-ball. (Ibid, cap. xxvi.)

1442 half that number raised 180,000 florins which were remitted to Sforza in lieu of troops, to avoid the pope's displeasure *.

The ancient families unable to support these repeated demands retired in numbers to their villas to seek for peace and escape imprisonment, for the jails were never empty of the powerless. But this availed not; the most searching edicts were relentlessly hurled against defaulters, and there was no shelter! The public "*Messi*" and "*Berrovieri*" or official bailiffs and tip-staves hunted them out like vermin; they swept the rural districts of cattle and produce, cleared the houses of furniture, wasted even the day's victuals of the miserable families, and when harvest came cleared the fields either partially or completely of their crops. Yet these distraints were never balanced against arrears, but taken as a positive fine from the defaulter who after so wide-spread a desolation often finished by long and loathsome imprisonment!

But even this was insufficient because numbers were absolutely ruined, so another decree was issued to banish all defaulters to the frontier: the ascendant faction attempted to justify it by an assertion that their enemies had punished the same crime by the axe and the block! To so startling a fact, which appears in no other author and only adds to the accumulation of evils inflicted under the name of liberty; it was replied, "You deprive us of existence when you take our goods; when you sell our funded property; when you set aside our wills; when you deny our marriage portions, which having been purchased by individuals on public faith unite that faith with liberty; and you thus defraud our daughters and sisters of their fortunes! You have sped everything from bad to worse, and paralysed the Catasto to avoid your own contributions. Your rivals left at least two things untouched and thus proved that they did not seek our total ruin; the Catasto and the election-purses; but

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. xxviii.

you have destroyed both and snapped all those ties that united the greatness of the commonwealth with the credit and stability of public securities. There is no concealment; oppression and rapacity are your avowed motives; you unblushingly demand, 'What is the difference between the rulers and the ruled except that the one commands, and the other is compelled to obey?' 'Who is there,' you ask, 'that would obey if the Catasto were in active operation? *We* had once to obey the laws; but while the Catasto sleeps, both laws and men will bow to *us*, and we shall still be lords where we once were only vassals. Do you believe,' is again your cry; 'do you believe that the authors of the Catasto had they foreseen its consequences would have made it? Believe it not, or you will err; for who from the rank of seignior voluntarily descends to that of vassal? from the elevation of the Seignory to the depths of servitude? We would rather die!'" Such were the unblushing avowals of successful faction: the powerful received their dues, escaped their contributions and imposed taxes; nominally to pay Sforza; but the fruits of which they shared and, as he said, made his name odious without any personal benefit. "I have had the odium," exclaimed Sforza to the Venetian and Florentine ambassadors, "I have had the odium, the people the cost, and their rulers the money"*.

The desire of gain increased by what it fed on and became insatiable; no villany was too deep or too daring; in whatever aspect or wherever it appeared it was clutched at by multitudes. Francesco della Luna proposed and carried a law that the "*Catasto should be laid asleep until such a time as a new law should awaken it*"†. None cared for present or future dangers or remembered past misfortunes, one object alone possessed their soul, the thirst of gold, and that by crooked ways; ways that led every finer feeling to destruction. All equality was lost, and in its stead, sudden individual wealth, an impo-

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. lviii. † Ibid, Appendice, No. 40.

verished nation; suffering, recklessness, deterioration of female modesty, and general licentiousness*.

This fraudulent state bankruptcy was not long confined to natives, for even the king of Portugal's dividends were withheld until he arrested all the Florentines in Lisbon: nor was misrule confined to finance alone; blood too was shed by the great and powerful, and shed unquestioned if the victim's family was impotent. A band of young men on their way to a wedding met a citizen of humble rank with whom it may be supposed, though not mentioned, they had had some previous difference, and unhesitatingly attacked and murdered him: then through their political influence, before there was time for any public charge, they procured a state proclamation which denounced the dead man as a rebel, and thus legalised his death by retrospective condemnation; but none inquired why the murdered man was made a rebel or in what he had offended!

The vengeance of the great was rightly denominated cruelty by poorer citizens, but by the former any legal opposition to it received that name, because their vengeance as they argued, only applied a punishment equal to the injury received. Salimbene Bartolini's son murdered the son of an innkeeper without a remark being made. Salimbene d'Antonio was stabbed by Ramondo d'Antonio Carialla and the murderer remained unpunished: the son of Baldassarre di Santi kicked a girl to death not only with impunity but unrebuked and almost unnoticed by any one. This open contempt of law and justice emboldened others, and Zenobi Capponi's son thought that he also might assassinate without danger; wherefore entering the residence of Piero Vermiglio he dragged that citizen's son out by force and killed him in the Piazza di Santa Maria Vecchia. This murder was probably accompanied by some unwonted cruelty for it created considerable agitation, and Zanobi repaired to entreat his kinsman Neri Capponi's influence on behalf of the

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. lviii., lx.

homicide: "A Capponi" he said "did not deserve less favour "than the Vespucci, the Bartolini and others who held an "inferior rank in the republic." But Neri sternly answered, "It is not the misery that I have caused or the murders I "have committed which have placed the greatness of our house "in my hands; on the contrary I acquired it by my earnest "endeavours to act according to law and reason: wherefore let "justice take its course"*. This was a stern sentence to a father's ears, but a just one. The conduct of Luigi Guicciardini vicar of Castello San Giovanni and one of Cosimo's staunchest partisans is a contrast. A quarrel broke out between two very young children in one of the petty towns of his district, which ended in a pugilistic encounter then as common in Tuscany as now in England; the country rector or podestà, after a rebuke, reconciled the children and confirmed the peace by making them drink together, but in consequence of the ephemeral and puerile character of this squabble no report was made to Guicciardini. Hearing of it by some indirect means he sent for the rector and without any previous examination applied the usual torture of the "*Colla*" so unmercifully that the old man expired under the infliction. This too passed unnoticed either by the local inhabitants, the Florentine government, or by Cosimo, THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY, who is described as the hinge and pivot on which the whole republic moved. "Wherefore," exclaims Cavalcanti, "if you Florentines suffer these things to "be, and without remonstrance: blame yourselves first, ere you "reproach the government; for he that silently regards such "crimes is the cause of them"†.

While the people reeled under their burdens they beheld Cosimo abounding in wealth; they saw a palace rise to their view such as Florence had never witnessed; they saw churches and convents built at his command with accumulated treasures; but, as the cry ran, with more hypocritical pride than true reli-

* Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. xxx. † Ibid, cap. xxxii.

gion; and, whether fact or falsehood, their cost was believed to flow from the national treasury in Sforza's name. "Who," it was everywhere asked, "who would not build in this princely style when it cost them nothing?" "The Medician balls," they ironically added, "were to be seen everywhere, even in "the privies of the convents, the nation was oppressed with an "unholy war to establish Cosimo's friend in the unjust pos- "session of sacred property, and society was fast falling back "to its pristine state when one man's will was law." The spectacle exhibited, by the city gate-tolls being daily carried to Cosimo's treasury grated on public suffering, although probably the mere interest of money lent by him to government; and so strong was this feeling that one night the gateway of his new and splendid palace was deluged in blood. This spiteful act might have been easily traced, but Cosimo had the moderation not to notice it although the whole city was scandalised*.

In 1446 new burdens were imposed at the mere discretion of a public board; the poor were squeezed still harder as well as aggravated with surplus charges; their more powerful neighbours remained underrated, and all by favour of these officers who under the name of "*Gli Uomini*" formed a Decemvirate with so vast a power as was never before seen in Florence†. When Francesco Sforza abandoned the league for Visconte, he audaciously demanded another subsidy; this raised such a storm that Cosimo was unable to carry the question constitutionally through the councils: he made a long speech from the Ringhiera which was received in sullen silence and supported by Boccaccino Alamanni alone; wherefore quitting all rule, a bolder measure was taken. Cosimo was a member of that board called the "Officers of the Mount" which entirely controlled the public revenues; availing himself of this power he and his colleagues passed a resolution, or rather a law, for the decrees of each

* Cavalcanti, iii^a Storia, cap. xxxiii. † Ibid, cap. xxxvi., l.

magistracy were laws in their own department, granting themselves full authority to enforce the instant liquidation of all arrears of taxes or other moneys due to the state notwithstanding any previous composition, security, or acquittance. Every debt was now restored to vitality or overlooked altogether at the pleasure of these officers and the dictation of Cosimo round whom all turned as a centre; and he had less regard for those who could not, than for those who would not pay; for the latter being solvent and of his own party, were consequently favoured *.

The rich were in this manner allowed to escape and greater sufferings heaped on the powerless, but Sforza's necessities were supplied, and Cosimo was satisfied; for his own freedom of will was enlarged, says Cavalcanti, and individual liberty restricted: he levied the money at pleasure, settled the principal and interest, period of payment; all power centered in his will, and most rigorously was it handled †. This infamous law was passed on the seventeenth of June 1447.

At length even Cosimo's own supporters became alarmed if not touched by the public calamities, and in the summer of 1447, a little after his cruel edict, Giovanni Bartoli being gonfalonier and Alessandro de' Bardi one of the priors, they began to cast about for a remedy, for they could no longer shut their eyes to the disastrous state of the commonwealth, to the present danger, and to the mass of future evil that was overshadowing the country. These two citizens therefore proposed a law which prohibited the arrest of any man for a public debt: they were wont to say that as woman's greatest ornament was rather her

* The haystacks in Tuscany were then as now built circularly round a long pole or mast firmly fixed in the ground running like a spit through the centre of the stack and crowned with an earthen vessel to keep the wet off. When hay is wanted the stack is cut round from the bottom, so that the whole mass slips regularly down the pole as fast as it is used, and though always resting on the earth, slides on the spar as a pivot. Cosimo was compared to this mast, and the republic to the haystack. He was also the knife that cut it.

† Cavalcanti, iiª Storia, cap. lxxiii.

modesty than rich attire, so that of a city was the multitude of its citizens rather than splendid mansions and public edifices. This law was intended to permit and even induce the emigrants and banished defaulters to return and pay what their poverty allowed, and it was proved by reason and experience that Florentine exiles were sufficiently numerous to increase the Gabelle by augmented consumption on their return to an amount nearly equal to all arrears due. This indeed appeared by the registers which averaged four florins of Gabella for every mouth in Florence, and ten thousand souls were expected to return under the protection of this salutary decree; all expatriated by COSIMO PADRE DELLA PATRIA and his myrmidons! This edict was received by the Seignory the colleges and the citizens generally as a great relief and its authors were justly and universally commended; all parties rejoiced, because it relieved the unfortunate without injuring the powerful *.

To this politic and merciful proposition then, it was supposed that there could be no opposition because its justice affected all, its impartiality was self-evident, and its humanity universally acknowledged. "Yet Cosimo," says Cavalcanti, "tempted by diabolical instigation hastened instantly to the palace to ruin this well-ordered law; regardless of public wishes, the fair fame of the commonwealth, or the means of impoverished citizens;" and moreover by a long oration succeeded in defeating it! His objections were rather an exposition of points that opposed his own will than arguments against the measure; and he finished his tedious harangue says the same author, by artfully asserting that this bill would open the city gates to his enemies, who were also those of the republic and of each citizen in particular. That as all the vegetable and animal creation required particular climates and aspects, so did man; and it would be impossible for both parties to exist at the same time in the same atmosphere!

* Cavalcanti, iii. Storia, cap. lxxxi.

The law in fact never contemplated or touched even by implication on the exiled faction; it named state debtors alone: but though Cosimo had no argument he had vast power, and that bore down all opposition. So the bill dropped and despotism triumphed * !

Cavalcanti tells us that at this period there were three distinct parties of different opinions contained within the circle of the government itself: these were; first the Popolani Grassi who, rough and harsh in their administration, were mingled with a great number of "*Arrabbiati:*" a name given at various times to different parties, but here apparently meaning the most bitter and violent of the Cosimeschi. The second was made up of decayed nobility who lived like desperate men and were disgusted at having those for their companions in the government whom, if all had been justly dealt with, they would have excluded as unworthy of the magistracy. The third class, composed of artificers or mere tradesmen, was always opposed to the other two; but the Popolani Grassi; especially the more recent families; were jealous of the man to whose dwelling they saw the public revenues flow in a constant stream and therefore wished to put a speedy end to it by his ruin. The Arrabbiati or other portion of the first class were violent men whose zeal was as much more fervent in wickedness as a thirst of vengeance for past injuries overcame the feelings of recent benefits: the aristocracy who formed the second class were angry at seeing men preferred to themselves in public magistracies who being enemies to Guelphic ascendancy they considered as enemies to the state, and would, says Cavalcanti, have willingly given one eye provided that Cosimo who mixed up this heterogeneous mass were deprived of both. The artificers were accused of being always envious of their superiors and glad of any quarrel or commotion amongst them; but all these discordant elements were held together and

* Cavalcanti, ii^a^ Storia, cap. lxxxi. and lxxxii.

played against each other by the strong but pliant hand of Cosimo *.

At last in the autumn of 1447 Puccio Pucci became gonfalonier of justice and even he is said to have attempted to stop this course of misrule, but unsuccessfully and probably insincerely although with sound reasoning, for his coffers were filled with the fruits of those evils which he now appeared so anxious to mitigate; he failed, and oppression continued: yet there was under all this a marvellous elasticity in the commercial spirit of Florence which enabled a few years of public peace to repair most of these and all other ravages of war, except the debt.†.

This somewhat prolix exposition of the state of Florence from 1434 to 1451 will probably be sufficient to modify that delusive glitter which has usually and artfully served to conceal the true character of Cosimo de' Medici as a man and a statesman; and for whom the most that can be said is that he was at once the lord and the slave of his party. The foregoing account is principally drawn from a cotemporary writer whose history after lying almost dormant in manuscript for about four hundred years has been recently published at Florence: he was a keen inquirer; evidently of an open and honest disposition and one of those ancient and noble families which benefited by the Medici's exaltation: one also who begins with unmeasured praise of Cosimo; a praise that as the history proceeds and events thicken, he is forced to qualify, and ultimately change into honest indignation at his conduct. Cavalcanti's account may therefore be taken as veracious as far as veracity can be found in history, but there are few things more adapted to petrify belief than a weary and disappointing search for truth in the contradictory records of past ages.

Reasons for war are never wanting when inclination tends to it, therefore the alliance with Venice and peace with Alphonso were but slight obstacles and in 1451 all parties again prepared

* Cavalcanti, Seconda Storia, cap. lxxxii. † Ibid., cap. lxxxvi.

for hostilities. The Venetians were exasperated at missing the conquest of Lombardy through the means of Florence whose powerful aid enabled so dangerous a neighbour as Sforza to achieve it; they had gained but little yet had exposed their ambitious spirit and became conscious of the waning of that deference with which Florence had treated them while her fears of the Visconti were lively. Early suspicions of a hostile union between Venice and Alphonso had arisen amongst the Florentines and were far from removed by the vague declaration of its being solely defensive and conservant of Italian tranquillity which these powers intimated that the Florentines wanted to disturb: Venice who dreaded Sforza, especially complained of their having granted a free passage through Lunigiana to the bands of Alexander Sforza for the support of his brother in Lombardy; of their having assisted the latter with money and reconciled him with the Marquis of Mantua to her manifest injury, and Florence was plainly told that were this line of conduct persevered in she must not be surprised if hostilities followed.

The meaning of all this was clear, and to Cosimo as acknowledged chieftain of the republic the task of replying was deputed; but it was a formal mockery; for though Cosimo, cool and firm, had justice on his side and urged it home; Venice had already resolved on hostilities and Alphonso was no less determined. As a prelude they ordered all Florentines, merchants and citizens to quit their respective territories under ruinous penalties, and this caused a rapid fall in the public funds from twenty-nine and thirty to less than twenty per cent.*. The Venetians made an alliance with Siena and tried hard to attach Bologna to their cause; but that city under the rule of Santi Bentivoglio remained devoted to Florence. This young man, whose proper name was Santi di Cascese, the

* Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 250.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 65.—Boninsegni, Lib. ii., p. 93.

reputed son of Ercole Bentivoglio by a lady of Poppi as was said; although her frailty seems very doubtful; had been elected chief of the Bolognese commonwealth, and his story is curious.

While Ercole was serving in the Casentino he became enamoured of the wife of Agnolo di Cascese of Poppi and always boasted amongst his own friends that her child was his; nevertheless neither Agnolo nor any of his family had any suspicion of the lady's infidelity even after her death; and Santi was brought up as his own child while he lived, and afterwards by his paternal uncle Antonio, who was in the woollen trade of Florence, until eighteen years of age. Anibale Bentivoglio left only an infant son, and his party felt the want of some mature head as a guide and rallying point: wherefore, hearing of Santi's existence Agnolo Acciaiuoli was commissioned to engage Neri Capponi, who was an intimate friend of Antonio di Cascese, in the negotiation. It was a delicate subject, and the fact of Santi's being a Bentivoglio not only new but incredible to all; nevertheless with the aid of Cosimo de' Medici, the proposal of Bologna was made known to the young Santi himself who instantly coloured up with shame and anger at the idea of thus injuring his mother's reputation. Neri told him on such an occasion he himself would have no scruple in accepting so brilliant an offer as the son of any one, whether it were Gino Capponi or Hercules Bentivoglio; but both he and Cosimo agreed in advising Santi to be guided by his own feelings and not act hastily; Cosimo in particular told him that if he felt the spirit of the Bentivogli rise within him he would go where fortune called him and pursue a brilliant career: if on the contrary the blood of the Cascesi predominated he would remain in Florence and follow his calling in tranquillity. Santi and his relations after considerable hesitation and delay left the decision in the hands of Neri who himself, as he tells us, felt the importance of the trust and gave his advice accordingly.

The result was Santi's acceptance and election by public acclamation to the chieftainship of the Bentivoglian faction and the republic of Bologna *.

The Venetians seeing this young Florentine's fidelity to his native land, conspired to unseat him by a domestic plot coupled with the secret introduction of their troops and a band of exiles by night through some of the public sewers. This was attempted and the city thrown into terror and confusion; Santi's friends urged him to fly and avoid the fate of Anibale; but with the name he had also assumed the spirit of the Bentivogli and scorning such council led on his followers to the charge and beat the conspirators from the city †. This attack at once decided Florence: hostilities now became certain; and Cosimo, Neri, Agnolo Acciaiuoli, Luca degli Albizzi, Domenico Boninsegni with five others were nominated to the Balià of war: Simoneto di Campo San Piero was again made general of the forces; a close alliance was concluded for ten years with Francesco Sforza; Siena was warned not to assist the enemies of Florence, and this warning was backed by a special embassy from Milan; Genoa was engaged on the same side and a joint embassy subsequently despatched to Charles VII. of France to secure his coöperation. Every means were adopted by Venice to annoy and weaken Florence previous to the declaration of hostilities and though Alphonso was equally in earnest he acted with more generosity and less vindictiveness than that republic. As both wished to give some reason for the war passports were demanded for a conjoint embassy to Florence and at once conceded to the royal ambassadors, but refused to the Venetians under pretence of not being able to treat without the acquiescence of Sforza: this was in retaliation for the same sort of treatment to their own ambassadors a short time before when sent to remonstrate against the expulsion of their citizens

* Neri Capponi, Commen. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tomo xviii., from p. 1207 to 1211.—Cavalcanti, Seconda Stor., cap. xlviii.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 67.

† Miscella, Hist. de Bologna, Rer. Ital. Script., p. 697, tomo xviii.

and was done on purpose to show how little the Venetian republic was now regarded by Florence *.

Hostilities seemed now imminent but were a while suspended by the emperor's arrival in Italy: Sigismund died in December 1437, and was succeeded as King of the Romans by his son-in-law Albert Duke of Austria, a man of excellent reputation who after a short reign of two years expired as was supposed by poison. He was succeeded in 1440 by Frederic III. King of the Romans who this year demanded a passage for himself and two thousand followers through the Florentine territory. It was freely granted, for the fears and pretensions of German emperors had now equally diminished and revolutions no longer followed their traces: Frederic was therefore received with great pomp and hospitality by the Florentines, and the whole of his expenses were paid to the amount of 35,000 florins while within the republican territory †. He was crowned with both crowns at Rome in March but his departure seemed to be the signal for war: on the ninth of April the French monarch's adhesion to the Florentine league was published; on the sixteenth of May Frederic quitted Ferrara after investing Borso d'Este with the dukedom of Modena and Reggio, and county of Rovigo and Comaccio; on the same day the Venetians attacked Sforza with a large army, and in July Alphonso's son Ferdinand of Calabria with twelve thousand men of all arms under Frederic Count of Urbino marched towards Tuscany ‡. A.D. 1452.

While Venice began hostilities on the side of Lodi the Marquis of Monferrato principally through her influence made a corresponding movement on that of Alexandria; but Sforza met both with vigour and having beaten the Marquis concen-

* Poggio, Lib. viii., pp. 250 and 253.—Ammirato, Stor., Lib. xxii., pp. 68, 69.

† Giov. Cambi, pp. 286, 290.—D. Boninsegni, Mem. di Fir., Lib. ii., p. 95, &c.

‡ D. Boninsegni, Mem. di Fir., p. 100.—Gio. Cambi, p. 302.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., pp. 70-72.—Muratori, Annali, Anno 1452.—Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 143.

trated his troops to the number of eighteen thousand horse and three thousand footmen on the Venetian frontier and assailed the Brescian territory with great success and damage to his enemies. The Duke of Calabria advanced by Perugia with the intention of taking Cortona, but deterred by its strong position sat down before the small fortress of Foiano which commands the road of communication between the Senese and Florentine territory in the Val-di-Chiana. This small place, weak in defences and garrisoned by only two hundred men besides the inhabitants, under the gallant conduct of Piero di Somma baffled the young prince and the experienced Count of Urbino, with all their army for forty-six days, and then made good terms of surrender. The prolonged siege of Foiano gave Florence time for preparation which was increased by the enemy's failure before Brolio and Cacchiano two private castles of the Ricasoli family: he then besieged Castellina only ten miles from Siena on the Florentine road, a place weak in its position and defences, which however stood out for forty-four days when the siege was raised with dishonour. Nevertheless Florence during all this time seems to have been very inactive, and allowed her territory to be ravaged without mercy even to within six miles of the capital: she had only collected about ten thousand men of all arms under Simoneta, Astorre da Faenza, and Gismondo Malatesta, which were stationed at Colle with orders, according to the usual military policy of Florence as recommended by Gino di Neri Capponi, not to hazard a pitched battle but save important posts without attending to smaller places which could always be recovered by treaty. Gino had always advocated a prolonged warfare. "Let pitched battles ever be shunned by our community," said he, "because men-at-arms are made like sheep: wherefore it is our game to conquer by time and not in one moment by fortune; for in the day of battle no man can tell ere it finish who shall have the victory, whatever advantage he may have; because he is subject to a thousand perils."

After the fruitless siege of Castellana which was raised in November Ferdinand and the Count of Urbino withdrew their army, now much diminished, to winter quarters and thus this formidable campaign terminated in nothing but the usual plunder of the unfortunate peasantry *.

To avoid the inconvenience of a continual change of magistrates and with it their variable designs and opinions; to secure a prompt supply of money for active warfare; and probably to strengthen the Medician authority; a decree passed the councils as early as Alphonso's invasion in July, for the creation of a new Balià of three hundred citizens with full powers to make fresh scrutinies, impose taxes, create loans, and exercise every other act of sovereign authority that circumstances might render expedient. They were moreover authorised to elect the gonfalonier of justice at their will instead of by lot, during the existence of hostilities and for six months after; or for two years certain under any circumstances. They were empowered also to divide themselves into fractional parts, or otherwise appoint boards of citizens for specific purposes with great powers in their several departments. Five citizens were chosen to form a committee of ways and means which was not long in proposing that 580,000 florins should be raised within the year, by a tax, apparently on the value of property and profits in trade; six rates were also imposed called the "*Decime Nuove*" to be collected monthly; but all apparently as forced loans at the enormous price, under certain conditions of immediate payment, of three florins stock for one of value; and yet, after the recent fall, this was about thirteen per cent. dearer than the market price of stocks. Five additional officers of the public funds were also nominated; as well as another board of equal number to levy a tax on the clergy and other "*Non Sopportanti*" or untaxed citizens of the community.

* Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 253.—Boninsegni, Lib. ii., p. 100.—Ricordi di Gino di Neri Capponi, Rer. Ital. Scrip., tomo xviii., p. 1149.—Boninsegni, Lib. ii., p. 101.

The inhabitants of Florence were in fact divided into two great classes; one registered on the public books as liable to ordinary taxation and called "*Sopportanti*" but subdivided into two parts, one of which was eligible to the honours of office the other not. The second grand division was into those not liable to ordinary taxation: these were called "*Non Sopportanti*," and, excepting the clergy, lived for the most part by manual labour in the exercise of mechanic arts and the lowest trades under the general denomination of "*Plebe*," "*Plebs*" or "*plebeians*" as in ancient Rome *. All refugees for public or private debts being inhabitants of the contado or district were allowed to return to their habitations free from any demand for five years, and the twenty "*Accoppiatori*" and secretaries who were in office from 1444 to 1448 were reëstablished with the full authority of that important office; besides which the Balià itself assumed the power of passing measures by a bare majority of votes when only two-thirds of their number were assembled, in the same manner as if two-thirds of the whole number had concurred. This was considered a violent and shameful infringement of constitutional law and ancient custom. "Wherefore," exclaims Giovanni Cambi, "let the people beware how they bestow power on any citizen if they wish to live free from tyranny in their city: by arms or secret voting the people can never be overcome, but the power of the great can subdue them." Another Board of Five was appointed to recover the arrears of taxes due to the state, which was accomplished with great success and therefore probably with great severity. The Gonfaloniér of Justice was selected from three citizens chosen for each quarter by the twenty Accoppiatori without being affected by the Divieto which was shortly after abolished at the instance of Neri Capponi and Vettori for every office except those of the Seignory, Colleges, and Decemvirate of War.

* Varchi, Stor. Fior., Lib. iii., p. 168.

In the month of September these three councils with the twenty Accoppiatori and the Great Balià of three hundred, all assembled to elect eight citizens for six months, to whom there seems to have been delegated extraordinary and sanguinary powers except in civil cases *, and the Grand Balià assumed that of choosing the priors at will instead of by lot during the war and for two years after. This seems to have been an unusual if not illegal stretch of authority either by the Balià or councils, not sanctioned even by the empty forms of a parliament: it was however repeatedly renewed by that assembly and never permanently relinquished until the revolution of 1494 †. Besides all these a board of five citizens was nominated for five years to superintend the enlargement of the great council-chamber now rendered necessary by the numerous influx of citizens from Venice and Naples in consequence of the late decrees of those states: this like all other commissions had great authority in its department; it was paid by one penny in the pound deducted from the soldier's pay, and in this manner by an accumulation of places with salary, privileges, and patronage, Cosimo and his new Balià multiplied their hold on public power and influenced every particle of the commonwealth.

It is now necessary to return for a moment to the general affairs of Italy. Pope Nicholas V. only mixed in Italian politics as a peace-maker: he was a man of learning, of literary taste, of a peaceful and virtuous character, more absorbed in literature and spiritual government than in worldly politics, and therefore impatient of the numerous interruptions to these favourite pursuits by the necessity of administering the civil government. He set no value on, and probably, from his education amongst the lower ranks of the priesthood, did not A.D. 1453.

* These were probably the "*Otto della Guardia*" but Giovanni Cambi's language is very old, confused, and difficult to disentangle, Nerli however places it nearly beyond a doubt. (Vide *Commentarj de' Fatti Civili di Firenze*, Lib. iii., p. 45.

† Giov. Cambi, p. 296 to p. 302.—Ammirato, Lib. xxii., p. 72.

even comprehend the practical value of political rights; or it may be that he beheld them so abused by faction that they lost all estimation in his eyes, and he expected as implicit obedience to authority as if they were cause and effect. There were however many Roman citizens of very different sentiments who bore impatiently the rule of Italian priests and still less so the dominion of foreigners. Eugenius and others had felt this spirit, and even after that priest's death but before the accession of Nicholas, Stefano Porcari a noble of high intellectual accomplishments dazzled by ancient Roman fame and the modern exploits of Rienzi, thought to signalise himself by an attempt to wrest his country from the grasp of prelates and a restoration of the democratic government. In 1447, and in the Bishop of Benevento's presence, he openly addressed an assembly of his fellow-citizens on the right of choosing their own rulers and form of government; and though that prelate checked his elocution and afterwards denounced him as a dangerous subject he nevertheless did not desist, for his hopes were based on the scandalous manners of priests and the discontent of every order of Roman citizens:—but, according to Macchiavelli, he relied above all things on the concluding lines of Petrarca's "*Spirto Gentile*" which say,

> "Sopra 'l Monte Tarpeo, Canzon, vedrai
> Un cavalier ch' Italia tutta onora,
> Pensoso più d' altrui, che di se stesso. Digli &c." *.

For poets being then superstitiously regarded as the receptacles of a prophetic spirit, he believed that what Petrarch uttered was the voice of Heaven and that he Porcari was the chosen instrument.

Elated with this enthusiasm he at the public games excited his countrymen to revolt and was banished for it to Bologna, with the further punishment of presenting himself daily before

* On the Tarpeian Rock, my song, thou wilt see a knight that all Italy honours, who is more thoughtful of others than of himself. Tell him &c.

the cardinal legate Besarion. Rome for the three last pontificates had been the scene of war sedition turbulence and sanguinary executions, and although more tranquil under Nicholas the public mind was still averse to the rule of priests and foreigners which brought with it a strange mixture of anarchy and despotism and trampled on the very name and shadow of liberty. While in Bologna, Stefano Porcari had full leisure to revise and reorganise his plans and not only managed to continue his intercourse with Rome but, what is scarcely credible, to visit that city several times and return within the period of his daily presentation to the legate. In 1453 his nephew Baptista Sciarra was instructed to assemble his friends at supper and have four hundred armed followers in readiness, promising to be with them ere the repast was finished. All this was executed according to his desire and he suddenly appeared and harangued the assembly dressed in rich attire, not from vanity but to facilitate his entrance unquestioned into the scene of action. After an eloquent address the mode of rising making the pope and his great officers prisoners, and revolutionising the state, were all settled; but Nicholas had timely information of this plot; he surrounded the house imprisoned all the guests, and hung Stefano with nine more conspirators untried and even without the last comforts of religion; and this was the spirit even of a mild and gentle pontiff!*

Such enterprises although mostly generous and sometimes glorious are rarely fortunate and, as Macchiavelli remarks, ever attended in their execution by certain evil. They are seldom successful because they require a congenial spirit in the community; they require the same virtue, patriotism, independence of mind, honesty of heart, and even enthusiasm in the citizens as in the authors; and as such things are only attempted or become necessary in times of extreme tyranny or general corruption, they are commonly alien to the spirit of the age

* Gio. Cambi, p. 306.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vi.—Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 174.

and ultimately fail for want of nourishment even though at first prosperous; but the reaction is always sure and terrible. Nicholas from having been a good man became a cruel and suspicious tyrant so that the vengeance and executions for this conspiracy were bitter, numerous, and long continued.

Although the French monarch Charles VII., felt well disposed to mingle in Italian politics and had warmly embraced the Florentine league, he was prevented by a war with England and particularly by his exertions to recover Bordeaux, from sending immediate succours; whereupon Agnolo Acciaiuoli and a Milanese ambassador were in the beginning of 1453 despatched to France to secure the coöperation of Regnier of Anjou, with the further assurance of subsequent aid in the conquest of Naples. Preparations for war recommenced in the spring and Sforza exchanged his superabundance of men for Florentine gold; two thousand soldiers were despatched into Tuscany under his brother Alexander, 80,000 florins being received in return, and Agnolo Acciaiuoli succeeded in engaging Regnier with two thousand four hundred men-at-arms to be in Lombardy by the middle of June.

But while these wars and seditions were convulsing Italy all Christendom was astounded by the intelligence that Constantinople had fallen under the Turkish scimitar on the eighteenth of June 1453, that the Emperor Constantine and all the Grecian forces besides many other Christians were cut to pieces, and that Sultan Mahomed II. was lord and master of the Grecian empire, which ended as it began, in a Constantine the son of Helena. This did not relax the sternness of Italian warfare; on the contrary Regnier's advent in Lombardy with his Frenchmen gave a more savage and cruel aspect to hostilities and exasperated every Italian both friend and foe: for bad as they were, the Italian soldiery of this period seem to have been far inferior to both French and English in the ferocity of their military character. One of the immediate

consequences of this disgust seems to have been Regnier's withdrawal to France against all Sforza's entreaties, but with the promise of sending his son as a substitute, who however confined his operations to Tuscany and the military command of the Florentines amongst whom he became extremely popular. In that country the sickness which thinned Ferdinand's army quartered in the Maremma allowed Florence to make an easy reconquest of all she had lost during the preceding year, and even to think of chastising Siena for her hostile conduct in the war. This was strongly opposed by Cosimo, and still more energetically and effectually by Neri Capponi who insisted that such a proceeding would at once force Siena into the arms of Alphonso for protection and thence would assuredly follow her subjugation: the truth of this was afterwards admitted by Ferdinand, who praised it as one of the wisest acts of Florentine policy; for the first arrow-flight against Siena would have made him lord of that republic*.

Unhappy at the perils of Christendom Pope Nicholas vainly tried to restore tranquillity and turn the tide of war on the Turks; but no efforts of his availed against the ambition and passions of exasperated or self-interested rulers, until necessity led them to grant what religion and humanity entreated for in vain. It was this necessity which finally led Francesco Sforza and the Venetians to conclude the peace of Lodi in April 1454 without consulting, and therefore affronting Alphonso. The Venetians, whose richest possessions lay principally in the east, were terror-stricken at the Turkish conquests and wished for peace while the Duke of Milan anxious to consolidate his power and secure a tranquil succession was equally desirous of it so that they soon came to terms and Cosimo's ambassadors assisted in concluding the treaty. Alphonso angry with the Venetians for treating him as a mere A.D. 1454.

* Neri Capponi, Com. Rer. Ital. Scrip., tomo xviii.—Corio, Histor., folio 404-5. —Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 153.

adherent refused to become a party and continued at least the appearance of hostilities until the following year *.

The peace of Lodi was followed by a defensive league for twenty-five years between the two republics and Milan, to which Alphonso, appeased by the subsequent behaviour of Venice, acceded in 1455, but only on condition that Ghismondo Malatesta, Astorre Manfredi of Faenza, and the Genoese republic should not be included; the two former for having first engaged themselves in his service, received their pay, and then deserted him for Florence; the last because he had never forgiven his own defeat and capture and the devotion of Genoa to the house of Anjou, besides a long-standing national hatred between the Genoese and the Catalans. While the Adorni were in power he was appeased by a nominal tribute, for he had assisted them when they were in exile and exasperated at their injuries; but amidst the numerous rapid and bloody revolutions of that stormy republic, when the rival house of Fregosi rose to power, the Adorni again shared Alphonso's enmity and led his hostile legions against their country. The fall of Constantinople had ruined Pera one of the most valuable colonies and establishments of Genoese commerce and all her other Levantine possessions were in jeopardy, therefore Alphonso attacked that convulsed and exhausted state at great advantage † and the government in this emergency probably foreseeing a failure of means to maintain these colonies made over their sovereignty with all its cares to the rich and wisely-ordered Bank of Saint George which from its establishment in 1407, had sailed on quietly and steadily, unruffled by the violence of political tempests. Alphonso made a desultory and galling war on them by land and sea; their allies were bound by treaty not to assist them: aid was vainly sought for in Italy, and all seemed hope-

* Poggio, Lib. viii., p. 257.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 78.—Neri Capponi, p. 1215, &c. — Poggio Bracciolini finishes his history and Neri Capponi his commentaries with this peace of Lodi.

† Justiniano, Annali di Genoa, Lib. v., Carta ccv.

less when the Doge Piero Fregoso in a fit of despair conferred the Seignory of Genoa on Charles VII. of France. John son of Regnier d'Anjou the titular Duke of Calabria and Alphonso's most dreaded rival was appointed viceroy, wherefore the war was continued with increased vigour until the death of Alphonso in June 1458 *.

After this monarch had ratified the peace of Lodi he made a double marriage with the house of Milan; first between his grandson and namesake, and a daughter of Francesco Sforza; secondly between the prince's sister and that duke's son Giovan-Galeazzo, both of which were publicly announced by a herald with great ceremony to the Florentine people and afterwards produced important consequences †.

Pope Nicholas also became a willing member of the league by binding himself and his successors to maintain it for five-and-twenty years and with such eagerness, A.D. 1455. that a decree was issued from the papal court for its publication on the twenty-fifth of March in every city belonging to the confederacy, but Nicholas died on the night of the twenty-fourth only a few hours before its accomplishment. He was succeeded early in April 1455 by Alphonso Borgia of Valentia under the name of Calixtus III. who began the fortunes and notoriety of a family infamous throughout the world. But though peace was made, war did not cease; for the condottiere Jacomo Piccinino, dismissed according to custom from the Venetian service, still held his followers together and being joined by other chiefs determined to maintain himself after the manner of the ancient companies; wherefore passing into Romagna and thence into the Senese territory he made war on that republic until his army was repulsed at a place called "Valle dell' Inferno" near the river Fiore by the united forces

* Paulo Interiano, Ristretto delle Istor. Genovesi, Lib. vii., fol. 203.— Agostino Justiniano, Annali di Genoa, Lib. v., cap. ccxi., and Carta ccv.

† Ammirato, Lib xxiii., p. 82.

of Florence, Sforza, and the Venetians. Success or extraneous aid could alone keep an army together whose general had no funds; wherefore Piccinino retired with diminished forces to Castiglione della Pescaia then in the possession of Naples: there he was succoured by Alphonso and even engaged in his service in 1456, when he was compelled to restore all his recent captures from Siena for 20,000 florins*.

We must now return to the domestic affairs of Florence which in the quiet of peace and the absence of political antagonists began to assume a different aspect. In December 1453 the all-powerful Balià was renewed for five years accompanied by a fresh scrutiny, and the election purses were still continued in the hands of the Accoppiatori of 1444 and 1448 to draw whom they pleased for the Seignory†. In the following year it was annulled and the city restored to the legitimate drawing of all magistracies and the ordinary rule of the councils; but about this change a few more words will be necessary‡. The divisions and enmities of Florence were always those of faction; not on the broad principles of a national party, but faction in its narrowest and vilest sense as connected with the government of a civilised community, and were therefore always mischievous. While influenced by fear of their rivals each party held together but when that band was broken they split into pieces and quarrelled with each other. These factions were almost a necessary consequence of the system of government; that extreme jealousy of permanent power which never allowed any magistracy to last more than a few months, except when some universal danger or strong sentiment absorbed the public mind, was an inconvenient obstacle to consecutive acts and steady councils: hence resulted the permanent existence of some one party in the state, the depository of a particular system of political action and the nucleus for all those of

* Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 181.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 81.

† Boninsegni, Mem. di Firenze, Lib. ii., p. 107.

‡ Ibid., p. 109.

similar opinions to settle upon. If this party were in power, its leaders though aloof from office ruled the state, and its politics were steadily supported, as under the Albizzi and Medici; but such authority could only be gained by the total abasement of every rival, a course always pursued without mercy by the winners. The losers could only acquire power by a fresh revolution, generally bloody, but always vindictive and michievous; and thus every "*Novità*" or change of administration became a serious business within, though it seldom altered the external policy of the country. National prosperity was of course much impaired and impeded by these struggles; yet whenever tranquillity returned and taxation lessened and commercial energy became free, the great masses recovered with wonderful elasticity and the state advanced in power and opulence until war and revolution again reduced it. The insufficiency of ordinary government in difficult times occasioned repeated creations of a Balià whenever anything extraordinary occurred, and the ascendant party always resorted to this dictatorship to trample on their opponents. As the Balià was above all law, the faction by whom it existed, and of whose creatures and partisans it was composed, was also above the laws although acting in apparent accordance with them; and in the first twenty years of Cosimo's reign this office was renewed repeatedly without any cessation of its functions, nominally by the free voice of the Florentine people in full assembly, but really under the glitter of a thousand mercenary lances. It has been already said that for the greater security of Cosimo and his faction new scrutinies were ordered by the Balià of 1434. That the purses were accordingly filled with his partisans; that the ancient mode of drawing the Seignory by lot was suspended, and by means of a set of officers called "Accopiatori" and "Secretaries of the Scrutiny" combined with the expiring Seignory, their successors were elected, so that the same party constantly retained the government, the Divieto itself being

sometimes disregarded, and Florence became a close corporation. We have shown that even this was insufficient for Cosimo's jealousy of the as yet unbanished but suspected citizens, wherefore to the "*Otto di Guardia*" was given full power over the life and property of any citizen that attempted to "*Far novità*" or make a change in the existing government; or who acted in any way against the state; or who even presumed to find such fault with the ascendant faction as to excite their suspicion or displeasure. We have seen also that their non-adherents were studiously oppressed with a taxation heavier than they could bear, and that by this jealous and rigorously executed policy at home, combined with foreign alliances which were more personal than national, Cosimo was enabled for twenty years to maintain a stern and steady course of domestic government, modified nevertheless by the utmost personal urbanity and apparent equality and without any violence; for his most despotic and oppressive acts were sanctified by legal and constitutional forms however unjustly made use of.

Much of this success no doubt arose from the forbearance and even coöperation of Neri Capponi, and it is not a little in Cosimo's favour that such a citizen should ever have supported him: the former had acquired his renown by public services in the field and cabinet and therefore had gained many friends and admirers, but few partisans; the latter both by public acts and private beneficence had won reputation friends and adherents in abundance. Neri had reputation alone; Cosimo added wealth and authority: Neri attracted and influenced; Cosimo, in addition, commanded; either directly by his own power, or indirectly by the innumerable liens he had on Florentine society. Nevertheless Capponi had a party with sufficient honesty to admire his character, or sufficient enmity against the Medici to cling to the skirts of their rival; but he was too weak to overcome Cosimo though too powerful to be vanquished. He therefore was perhaps more really useful

in checking unlawful power and mitigating domestic oppression, as well as in the conduct of foreign affairs and external war, than he would have been in attempting, perhaps vainly attempting, to crush his adversary and restore Florence to that liberty which he must have seen had been willingly bartered for the wealth and protection of Cosimo. His example probably repressed his party while he lived; yet two years before his death* a change came over the spirit of the people and disposed many to shake off the unbounded authority of Cosimo nay some of his followers forgetting that even their very existence depended on him, began to look still further and contemplate their own complete emancipation. They therefore expressed their wishes more frankly than was either expected or palatable and obliged him to discuss the remedy with his most confidential advisers.

Two ways immediately presented themselves: open force or an apparent yielding: either to grapple at once with the danger and trusting to friends and self-sufficient power, to new partisans and even the restoration if need were of some exiled citizens, to maintain himself against aggressors: or else to let the new spirit have its way and work itself into a labyrinth of difficulties until compelled to supplicate his assistance, when he would return more despotic and unshackled than before. He chose the latter; consented that the Balià should expire, the magistracies be drawn by lot, and the whole constitution return to its legitimate and original movement. He was well aware that the election purses were full of his partisans, that his power was safe, his influence undiminished and certain to remain so, because it depended on his riches, his personal character and his exalted station, not alone in Florence but

* Both Nerli and Macchiavelli erroneously place Neri Capponi's death in 1455, but the codicil to his will is dated in 1456, and he probably died in 1457.—It seems probable that he may have retired from public life in 1455, as the above authors attribute the political changes of that year to his death which was supposed to have removed the last and most formidable impediment to Cosimo's supremacy.

throughout Christendom and even beyond it. He also foresaw that those who imagined him unnecessary to their greatness, instead of the trains of obsequious clients that attended them while power was sure and permanent, would when the magistracies were thrown open to the crowd be utterly deserted and sink into the neglected obscurity of private men. He knew that they could never bear this, nor the equality they would be compelled to suffer, nor the sight of inferiors surpassing them in the acquirement of those honours that they had hitherto exclusively enjoyed, nor the neglect, nor derision, nor insolence, nor humiliation to which they would be exposed when they had only their own reputation to support them; and all this he expected would soon convince them that not he but they had fallen.

All happened exactly as he had foreseen; but he pretended not to notice it, and supported every popular measure in the councils: the citizens rejoiced in their recovered liberty; liberal and popular acts became frequent; tongues were loosened; opinions openly declared; and the lately enthralled Florence bounded with all the elasticity of recovered freedom. Cosimo looked on and smiled; being resolved to let things run to extremity ere he interfered to stop them: Rucellai was the first freely chosen gonfalonier for July and August 1455. Under him the artisans and less powerful citizens assumed unwonted power and triumphed over their late oppressors; democracy raised its many-headed form and with all the wantonness of newgotten power scorned and insulted the very men who had procured it, as the dogs of Scylla barked at their enchanted mother.

Sensible of their mistake the new seceders most humbly entreated Cosimo to reëstablish his authority by a Balia but he refused; their supplications were frequent but he was inexorable and resolved to humble them. This state of things
A.D. 1456-7. continued through the two following years; in the latter of which the plague and a conspiracy by one of the Ricci for

a while perplexed the community: but in January 1458, public boldness had so much increased with this brief period of liberty that a decree to reëstablish the Catasto of 1427 was proposed and carried in the councils! This struck terror into the great, and coupled with an increasing audacity of A.D. 1458. the citizens startled even Cosimo, for it imposed taxes impartially and legally, and not by the mere will of one or several powerful citizens. The seceders now became still more humble and importunate; they asked for a parliament and Balià; he was still implacable and would only consent on condition that the proposal was carried in a regular manner through all the councils without coercion. This motion was made and lost as Cosimo expected; another and still more abject deputation followed, but he was still inexorable and resolved to bring down their pride to the lowest: the gonfalonier Matteo Bartoli tried in spite of him to carry it in the Seignory, but was soon made sensible of Cosimo's imposing influence there: he was laughed to scorn and retired in anger, and a law passed making it penal for any Balià to be created, except by acclamation in all the councils. The Medici however, after these proofs of supremacy, not choosing that things should get quite beyond his reach, deemed it high time to curb the rising spirit of the people.

Luca Pitti, a man of more audacity than honesty or wisdom became gonfalonier in July and Cosimo resolved to make him the instrument of his will and the scape-goat for any odium that might be attached to the resumption of his former authority. Pitti accordingly proposed in the councils the formation of a new Balià, but in vain: he then plainly threatened that what they refused in the palace they should be compelled to do on the Ringhiera by force of arms, and after a month spent in unsuccessful attempts he prepared the Seignory, assembled a strong body of troops, garrisoned the palace, occupied all the leading streets, and certain of the armed assistance of

Cosimo and his numerous followers, summoned a parliament on the eleventh of August and forcibly carried his decree. Thus was Cosimo's game well played for him; a Balià was appointed, absolute dominion reëstablished, the citizens again reduced to servitude, and the car of the Medici once more rolled onward with increasing majesty*!

To mark this epoch more distinctly Luca Pitti was subsequently made a knight, and as if in mockery, the priors of the Arts assumed in 1459 the title of "*Priors of Liberty!*" The name for the substance! This was intended to exalt the Seignory above all civic equality and in a manner separate them from those citizens by whom they were to be no longer elected. The gonfalonier was ordered amongst other forms to take precedence of both foreign rectors, which was never before attempted; and the bold successful Pitti became after Cosimo, one of the most distinguished leaders of the republic†.

This resolution was not unattended by severity: more than two years of emancipation had opened many a bold and imprudent mouth and filled many a heart with the fallacious hopes of permanent liberty, so that when Luca Pitti first proposed the re-appointment of a Balià he was resolutely withstood by Girolamo Macchiavelli a doctor of laws who naturally demanded reason for this change at a time when profound peace existed and nothing extraordinary had occurred. If money were required there was the Catasto ready to supply it without favour or oppression, wherefore he asserted that some deception lay concealed under this veil, a deception which required exposure and that the people should be no longer kept in ignorance of their own affairs. "He saw no such merits in the more powerful citizens that they should, by excluding the rest as bondsmen from the government, rule alone as tyrants," wherefore he boldly opposed

* Jacopo Pitti, Storia Fiorent., Lib. i°, p. 19.
† Nerli, Com., Lib. iii., p. 45.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 82-5.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.—Morelli, Cron. p. 177.—Boninsegni, Lib. ii., from 113 to 123.—Giov. Cambi, p. 358 to 367.

the bill. This opposition defeated the project for the time but brought down vengeance from the Seignory and potent citizens on his audacious head; and, as it were to exhibit an example of Florentine liberty, he and his brother were arrested and put to the torture in order to have this question answered, "By whom "he was instigated to speak so disrespectfully of the government "and propagate words so offensive as '*slaves* and *tyrants*,' in a "free city; and what open or secret practices he held against "the tranquillity of the commonwealth?" Macchiavelli overcome by the extremity of torment confessed to having intelligence with many citizens whose opinions were similar to his own, and amongst them named Antonio Barbadori and Carlo Benizi as the principal. These two were also tormented: they confirmed Macchiavelli's confession and unveiled so widespread a spirit of political liberty as to determine Luca with Cosimo's covert acquiescence to summon a parliament and establish a Balia by force of arms, as already related *.

Ten new accopiatori and ten secretaries were added to those of 1434, and three hundred and fifty-two citizens were chosen to conduct the forthcoming scrutiny; these widely extended selections while they enlisted a host of rich and powerful families in his favour by the participation of public honours and authority, showed also the vast political influence of Cosimo, who could thus implicitly trust to the assured support of so many citizens. After this came persecution, and eighteen distinguished citizens including the above prisoners were banished, the Macchiavelli and Benizi for five-and-twenty years, with a deprivation of civic rights for all their descendants besides a large fine on the first named family. The rest were punished by mulcts, exile, and admonition for themselves and descendants; and all this as Cambi quaintly observes "*For placing the eggs in the basket after their own fashion*"†. This was followed in Novem-

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 87.—Gio. Cambi, p. 358.—Lionardo Morelli, p. 177.

† Per assettare l' uova nel paneruzolo a lor modo; (Gio. Cambi, Istoric, p. 362.)

ber and December by a sentence of ten years' additional exile against all those not banished from the state, and even the old offenders of 1434 had their time prolonged to a period of five-and-twenty years after the original sentence should be expired. Eleven entire families were thus expatriated *. "Wherefore" exclaims Giovanni Cambi, "Learn all ye that read this, never "to consent to the creation of a Balià or the assembly of a par-"liament; rather die with sword in hand than suffer a tyrant "over you; for in a short time the tyrant will humble those "who have made him great and exalt new and ignoble men of "no reputation in the community in order to secure their sup-"port; for his destruction would be theirs †".

About the same period forty of the banished citizens were proclaimed rebels and five more beheaded, besides Girolamo Macchiavelli who was taken by the treachery of some friend in Lunigiana while plotting against the government and died under the torture, bringing down a sentence of exile on twenty-five more citizens.

A new council of a hundred was created in January 1459 from the principal citizens of each quarter for two months and with a Divieto of six; but it seems to have been ephemeral and its precise object not apparent. Not so another smaller council called the "*Otto di Balià*" which also came into existence at this epoch, and which Ammirato believes to be that subsequently called the "*Otto di Pratica.*" It was invested with the power of capital punishment, or at least that of declaring exiles to be rebels, a formidable authority as we shall hereafter see; and with these rigorous proceedings finished the duration of this Balià ‡.

A.D. 1459.

So determined a course of policy of which both the credit and odium were artfully left by Cosimo to Luca Pitti raised

* Namely, the Castellani, Bardi, Ardinghelli, Belfradelli, Strozzi, Peruzzi, Guasconi, Rondinelli, Brancacci, Guadagni, and Baldovinetti.

† G. Cambi, p. 363.

‡ Francesco Cei, Mem. Storiche, p. 6, MS.—Giov. Cambi, p. 364.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., pp. 87, 88.

the reputation of the latter so high that he nearly eclipsed the Medici himself and was almost considered as chief and leader of the commonwealth; and so high was the Seignory's power then held, that many citizens deemed him perfectly justified, after vainly trying to carry his measures legitimately through the councils, in thus forcibly vindicating the dignity of government. Whoever wanted anything addressed themselves to him; on him were showered gifts and offerings innumerable from Cosimo downwards; while passing through the streets he was reverenced as a prince; he was attended in his house, followed to the palace, to churches, to assemblies; all made way for him: nor did he fail to increase this popularity by gracious manners; he rendered himself acceptable to everybody by attentions, conversation, and every kind of urbanity*. Thus aided and honoured he soon accumulated a mass of additional riches to the amount of 20,000 florins and began to build two palaces; one which still bears his name, and the less grand but magnificent villa of Rusciano†. The former eclipsed everything of the kind before attempted in Florence, and here again not only the Florentine but other communities pressed forward in rivalry to supply labour, materials, and every requisite for the construction of his kingly residence; nay, even thieves, robbers, homicides and all other criminals, provided they were useful, there as Macchiavelli assures us found a sanctuary‡. But this popularity was nevertheless attended by oppression, tyranny, and breach of law, especially in an indis-

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 87.

† Thus Macchiavelli, Ammirato, &c. But these buildings according to Vasari, would seem to have been *commenced* long before, because Filippo Brunelleschi who *furnished the design* for both died according to that author in 1446. Yet it is possible, nay probable, that the above historians are right, because Vasari does not say that Brunelleschi *executed* the work; on the contrary, he says this was done by a pupil called *Luca Fancelli* who built many things for Brunelleschi. (*Vide Vasari, Vita di Fil. Brunellesco*, vol. iv., p. 250, &c.)

‡ There were not wanting those who denied these charges, and Macchiavelli has been accused of misrepresentation from private anger at the cruel treatment of Girolamo Macchiavelli. (*Vide Bruto, Ist. Fior.*, Lib. iiº, p. 131.)

criminate protection of malefactors; yet he was not singular; for all who had been restored by Cosimo to their former state, although they did not build, says Macchiavelli, were as violent and tyrannical as he*.

In this condition were the affairs of Florence when the death of Pope Calixtus III. made room for Æneas Sylvius Bishop of Corsignano in the Senese state, under the name of Pius II. His whole soul was bent on sending a crusade against the Turks then a more legitimate and reasonable undertaking than in preceding ages, for they were rolling westward in a mighty wave and threatened the submersion of Christendom. A congress was summoned for this purpose at Mantua where the pontiff appeared in May 1459; but unable as yet to effect any movement he returned to Rome in January 1460 when war had already broken out between King Ferdinand of Naples and John of Anjou titular Duke of Calabria†. Ambassadors arrived at Florence from both these princes to solicit aid, and true to their Gallic predilections the Florentines without hesitation voted 80,000 ducats annually to the latter, but by Cosimo's advice the grant was kept secret until Francesco Sforza's opinion became known. The Duke of Milan with a long-sighted policy was not only opposed to the measure but so fearful of French interference, and of course influenced by his family connections with Naples, that he had already determined to assist Ferdinand and had even engaged the pope in his views for the maintenance of Italian tranquillity, as more likely to be preserved by a native monarch than a transalpine stranger. This unsettled the Florentines who after some warm debating rescinded their vote and dismissed both embassies with a declaration of pure neutrality on the ground of impotence, the consequence of public debt; but not without loud complaints from Ferdinand as a palpable neglect of the late alliance.

A.D. 1460.

* Bruto, Ist. Fior., Lib. ii. p. 129.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii. Cavalcanti also condemns him.

† Muratori, Annali.

About the same time Girolamo Macchiavelli's arrest and death by torture occurred, with the above noticed banishment of twenty-five more citizens, and this led to a prolongation for five years of the close election system or drawing the magistracies "*by hand*," as it was called, together with a public offer of reward to any who would murder those exiles that had been declared rebels by the "*Otto di Balìa*." In this the benevolence of Cosimo and his party may be seen, not that such severities were singular under the Medician rule, or even perhaps in the better days of the republic against individual rebels in times of high excitement; but Cosimo always professed his aversion to blood.

Piero his eldest son became gonfalonier in 1461, and Florence was calm; but according to Macchiavelli it was the leaden rest of despotism; for the rule of Pitti and his faction continued almost intolerable until Cosimo's death in 1464; strengthening as that veteran waned and even, as is said, embittering his last days by political violence. Soon after their reëxaltation old age and its attendant weakness seem to have gradually diminished his energy and withdrawn his attention from public business so that those whom he had at first humbled and then restored rode onward with a slackened rein and trampled as they listed on the commonwealth. Francesco Sforza when low in fortune had promised Cosimo if ever he became Duke of Milan to aid him in the conquest of Lucca; an object as we are told much at the Medici's heart not only to compensate for his former intentional and calamitous failure against that city, but also because he was eager to signalise his administration like the Albizzi, by some notable acquisition, and none seemed so advantageous or popular or, with Sforza's aid, so easily accomplished as that of Lucca. A.D. 1461.

The Duke of Milan's views however differed from those of Francesco Sforza the adventurous condottiere: tired of war and with sufficient occupation in the settlement of his own states he

disregarded the promises made to a man on whom he was no longer dependent. This was wise and politic, but ungrateful, and painfully felt so by the Medici to whom he was above all others indebted for his success: yet Cosimo would never quarrel with Sforza; his alliance, his nominal support, the very glitter of his reputation were of importance not only to his own family and private interests but the republic, and his last instructions were to keep well with Milan*. Nevertheless Francesco's conduct grieved him as much as that of his own party is said to have disgusted him; and the more so as from his growing infirmities he probably felt himself unable effectually to oppose them. Yet his son Giovanni, who is described as having been fully equal to maintain his father's reputation, was now in middle life and therefore able to control any unruly citizens, but as we hear nothing of him until his death it may be supposed either that the violence of faction was less than has been represented, or else not so displeasing to Cosimo. However this may be, the latter seems now to have retired much from public life and devoted himself to literature and the fine arts; to building and the embellishment of his native city, more especially in religious edifices, a strange turn for one who declared "*that states could not be held with a paternoster in the hand.*" But Cosimo felt sure that the good word of the priesthood and the praises of literary men would be a more favourable passport to posterity than a rigid historical scrutiny of his political conduct. Yet with all his errors, and they were many, he never apparently stepped beyond the ranks of civic equality; his rule was modest and quiet; the guiding hand was little seen; its force and management were felt rather than its ostentation; but he was all the while esteemed as a sovereign prince by foreign states and acknowledged as the arbitrator or
A.D. 1462. mediator of every league or peace that was made in Italy. He had already passed the year 1462 and most of 1463

* Bruto, Lib. i., pp. 91, 95.

in comparative seclusion when his spirit became completely broken by the death of his youngest son Giovanni at forty-two years of age. Piero, though probably of a more amiable nature than Cosimo and far from deficient in ability, was too great an invalid to encounter the growing audacity of faction; his two sons Lorenzo and Giuliano however promising were at this time only fifteen and ten years old and the son of Giovanni had already passed away, so that when Cosimo crippled by gout was borne to his splendid palace, he said with a deep sigh, "*This house is now too large for so small a family!*" A.D. 1463.

The pope who had finally succeeded in assembling an armament at Ancona against the Turks died there on the fourteenth of August 1464, just as the Doge of Venice arrived with his fleet and army. He was succeeded by Pietro Barbo a noble Venetian under the name of Paul II. but Cosimo, who on hearing of this enterprise had remarked that the pope, an old man, was engaging in a project fit only for a young one, did not live even to see this proof of his foresight. He had reached the age of seventy-five and feeling his end approach assembled his friends and kinsmen and addressed them as we are told by the historian Bruto substantially as follows.

"If it be true that I ought to have so lived as now to reap "the fruits of life, I might well believe that I had gathered "them in abundance, because I hardly remember anything in "my past conduct that gives me cause of repentance. And "since I feel that the throwing off of this mortal nature opens "the door to a better life I am now with a light and cheerful "heart prepared to quit the world. Although I might during "my lifetime have easily enjoyed all that is most useful and "ornamental to man, I yet nourished my soul with the brighter "hopes of those joys that awaited me in another and more "blessed existence, and thus it cost me but little to despise "the remainder. I am now arrived at that death which leads

"to immortality, and although it may come with bitterness to "you who expect it later, I think that for me it is best. In "the conduct of life I was ever distressed, when, failing in "those sacred duties imposed on me by nature towards my "country and kindred, I rather chose to follow my own plea- "sure and convenience, wherefore my heart is now pained by "the thoughts of that country and kindred which are still "dearer to me than life.—I had sons.—One of them
A.D. 1464. "in whom (if I am not blinded by paternal affection) "to singular virtue and magnanimity was joined an equal "vigour of body, I have lost by an untimely death. I leave "another, who wants not patriotism nor affection towards his "friends, nor prudence, nor firmness of mind that is proof "against every fortune; but on him, in consequence of his "inconstant health and strength, the reliance can be but weak. "Yet to him and to his sons, although without my protection, "you, while you prosper, will bear an affectionate remembrance, "in order that they may not only be sheltered from misfor- "tune but even feel this blow less sensibly; and I trust to "your thus acting because I have so often experienced your "great benevolence and fidelity when the public good forbade "me to make use of them. I declare, as I hope for and have "ever wished to go from this world to God's presence, that the "thought of the commonwealth alone afflicts me: I see ruin "and devastation overhanging it, so that even if some hope "remain I still foresee that the evil-disposed can destroy it "(and at this they are aiming with a wicked and impious con- "spiracy) but that the good and lovers of their country cannot "so easily preserve it. Throughout my whole life I have been "ever anxious as far as I could, when my rivals allowed me, "to merit well both privately and publicly of the community: "thus when I returned from exile, while maintaining concord "amongst the different orders at home, I cultivated and I "gained the friendship of foreign powers either by council or

" conduct, but always with that public authority which I never
" claimed, but which you wished me to hold in the city; and
" thus acting as becomes a citizen towards his country I ruled
" the commonwealth. It is now unsteady, for wicked men
" have been long conspiring to ruin it: I leave to your wisdom
" your authority your vigilance the charge of staving off this
" calamity, a charge which you will cheerfully undertake, and
" doubtless place the safety of that country by which you have
" so much benefited before your personal and private interests.
" Nevertheless to this hope is opposed that canker which eats
" into the heart of even the well-disposed.—I mean ambition.
" —But the state need not fear even this, if without resorting
" to that violence which has so often been the ruin of empires
" it cede to the love of country. Beware of this, and you have
" an easy and expeditious mode of defending the republic; and
" you may easily break up and enfeeble all the powers of that
" vice if you entrench yourselves on one side with reason; and
" suffer no surprise on the other by the deceitfulness of honours
" and command; if you detest and execrate those with whom
" rapacity can do more than patriotism; and if you determine
" to build your own reputation on the praise that men will
" bestow on you for justice piety and moderation.—We have
" no foreign war; and the concord of the citizens when the
" ambitious, (who are the cruel and constant pest of their
" country) shall be repressed, will preserve peace within; and
" then have no fear.

" One thing I wish more especially to impress on you: by
" every means try and maintain the friendship of Francesco
" Sforza whatever may have been his conduct towards us who
" have made him the lord of so fair a dominion. But as regards
" the safety and reputation of the community trust him only so
" far as that in your prosperity alone, rather than in your ad-
" versity, he may be able to give you proof as he has already
" done of his ingratitude. I would rather he were our friend;

"but as he appears, and really is so great, I would advise that "the circumstance of his power not being turned against you "should be considered a positive benefit. Of what he already "owes to the republic make little or no account; but take ye "good care that for the future he shall owe nothing, and when "you have accomplished this be satisfied. From this time for- "ward let not the recollection of former friendship induce you to "give him your confidence: man by nature is so composed that, "against the common rule of right, he who receives and ought "to remember a benefit quickly forgets it, while the benefactor "who ought long to have forgotten it carefully preserves its "memory: and this must necessarily be when both one and "the other follows his interest instead of his duty. He that "receives a favour and has made use of it cares for nothing "further; he drives away the recollection, which is peradven- "ture troublesome and burdensome unless nested in a grateful "heart; and on the contrary he that confers it keeps the "remembrance constantly fitted in his mind; and nourished "by the expectation of a future and useful return it remains "tenacious and lively within him. Hence, such benefits being "venal, the benefactor as if doomed to deserved punishment "expects in vain that the obliged ingrate may return the favour. "Sforza will never make war for you as long as he wishes to "maintain the peace of his dominions; more especially as he "is wearied after the achievements of so many great exploits; "but that he may not be engaged by your enemies against you "should be most sedulously provided for. Let him then remain "quiet, but keep his friendship; because if you ever be engaged "in war the reputation he enjoys will be a most powerful aux- "iliary." Here Cosimo paused for breath and then turning to his son continued. "Thou also Piero in whom the republic is "about to place its confidence, since the violence of my in- "firmity will not allow me, as I intended, completely to fulfil "this last office of paternal affection, I pray and conjure thee

"to preserve as thou best can that devotion to thy country, of "which, being now of mature age, from long experience of "affairs, domestic discipline, and the example of thy forefathers, "thou art capable; a devotion that no man, however prudent "ever found it easy to preserve. In the government of the "republic demand advice from those whose opinion is most safe, "because of their fidelity benevolence and wisdom. Remember "that if thou seekest fame and glory, the brightest and highest "is that which the memory of a grateful country consecrates "to patriotism: if power and riches, remember that for these "things we should only be anxious as they promote the public "welfare. Far be from thee the desire to exalt thyself above "thy fellow-citizens, because the wish of surpassing them, ex-"cept in virtue and respectability of life, is an impious and "execrable crime. In private life let all the world behold thy "temperance and equality: towards honourable and retiring "men use liberality, which without ostentation or display of "power, or suspicion of prodigality, may find its praise in bene-"ficence alone. In the magistracy be thou mild as long as "mildness conduces to public utility, but severe if the times "require it; so that all may know that the one to humanity, "the other to fidelity and the magisterial office are indispens-"able. Pardon men, but make war on their crimes. Let the "friendship of foreigners be cultivated if not detrimental to the "commonwealth; and on the contrary, have no enmities ex-"cept on behalf of thy country and against the wicked. Let "war be made on foreign powers either to sustain national "rights or repel injuries; but so that it may seem defensive "not aggressive; and only after every endeavour to avoid it. "As the desire of extending the national territory is unbounded "so let moderation in doing it be conspicuous; and let it be "done (an important and generally neglected thing) in the best "and honestest manner. All these things will be most easy if "thou rememberest who thou art and what part thou art des-

" tined to act for thy country; particularly observing this; that " not satisfied with having consulted the wisest and best citi- " zens about thy measures, confide little or nothing in thyself, " but implore the assistance of Him who alone is powerful when " human strength fails; implore the aid and succour of the " Almighty " *.

We learn from Piero's letter to his sons that Cosimo did just before his death converse on these subjects, but whether this discourse as given by Bruto, certainly no friend of the Medici, were reported at the time or whether it is a mere historical compilation from common fame is difficult to tell. But says the above historian, if while alive he had exhibited such a disposition as is apparent in his last words he would have been truly worthy (as he really appeared to many) from his excellent and illustrious mental endowments to be compared in power and dignity to the greatest monarchs of the age †.

The striking discrepancy between Cosimo's dying words and the principal actions of his life except in a politic, and perhaps natural absence of ostentation, is startling; but becomes less so when we consider that he addressed himself exclusively to the chiefs of his own faction; and that faction, in the eyes of Cosimo and all his auditors, identical with the commonwealth. Therefore when he speaks of ruin overhanging the republic, he means his own party; when he talks of the good, or of wicked and evil disposed men he indicates the friends, or the adversaries and apostates of that party, such as Girolamo Macchiavelli and the Benizi. When he mentions conspiracy it must be taken as against Medician ascendancy; and if he declares the republic unsteady his auditors comprehend only dangers against that faction. In a similar strain he deprecates ambition as tending to the separation and destruction of that which he had raised and cemented: patriotism is fidelity to the same body; the inordinate love of honours and office tend to weaken; concord and

* Bruto, Lib. i°., p. 91. † Ibid., p. 101.

self-abnegation to strengthen the state or predominant faction. The friendship of Sforza is strongly pushed forward, certainly not as necessary to Florence for it was a fertile source of evil and loud complaint; but as all-important to the preservation of Medician rule, because a Milanese force was always supposed to be ready for assisting the politic Cosimo; and the reputation remained useful after both necessity and amity had ceased. His mortification about the conquest of Lucca is an apt commentary on his injunctions touching the enlargement of national dominion and principle of war; and his whole discourse must be taken, if ever really uttered; as exclusively partisan; though probably, if his circumstances be considered, believed by himself and his audience to be just and true. A few days after this he expired at his villa of Careggi on the first of August 1464, in his seventy-seventh year regretted by everybody; for his very enemies looked forward in dismay to the future acts of men who even when awed by his presence were so unreserved in their misrule, and Piero inspired no confidence *.

There are few men whose actions and public character have been more difficult of appreciation than those of Cosimo de' Medici: that he was a man of high intellectual powers and consummate prudence; bold, ambitious, and politically unscrupulous his actions testify: that he was by nature benevolent in all that did not thwart his ambition is vaunted to the skies by his admirers and hardly denied by his enemies; and that even his ambition itself was nourished and carried forward to complete and permanent success by an apparent generosity, a benevolence that alleviated want and supplied public necessity while it blinded men to his secret rule of action, is asserted. But who shall discriminate between real benevolence and political intrigue, between pure religious feeling and hypocrisy, between patriotism and personal ambition? Cosimo mingled them altogether with so cunning a hand and veiled them with so

* Piero di Medici, Ricordi.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.

thick a veil that even his cotemporaries though they suffered by his deeds were staggered in the belief of what their senses testified *.

For all these things he must be judged by a higher tribunal than that of history. Thus much is certain; Cosimo was resolved to be supreme in the republic, but in solid power, not pageantry; and anything that crossed that resolution found no mercy at his hands: neither did he ever risk a diminution of authority by the acceptance of any external employment that might remove him long from the seat of government; apparently following the maxim of Gino Capponi, who advises those that aspired to be great within the city not to absent themselves too frequently, unless on great occasions in which they were likely to give much pleasure to the community, and the consequences of which were immediate and palpable †. His administration of the laws is said to have been just where it did not interfere with politics, but his suspension of the same Catasto in which his more virtuous father gloried and which was intrinsically so just and popular, and the substitution of a partial, grinding, and arbitrary taxation is enough to show that his whole mind was imbued with that ambition which his dying accents so strongly deprecated.

But we have already asked, who is now to draw the line between sincerity and deceit? If we are to judge from appearances, and literary adulation, and filial love; Cosimo's life was one of religion, humility, benevolence, and moderation; many were they that blessed him; none had ever just cause of complaint against him. If we are to judge from facts, his whole life seems to have been one of deep and all-embracing simulation; of stern, unrelenting ambition; and unmitigated selfishness in everything connected with that absorbing passion. His deception was the more easy because there is reason to believe

* Bruto, Lib. i°.—Varchi, Lib., i°, p. 5. Scrip., tom. xviii., p. 1149.—Ricordi di Piero de' Medici.

† Ricordi di Gino Capponi, Rer. It.

that the virtues his ambition led him to affect were not unnatural, and had he been a legitimate hereditary sovereign he would have been a blessing to his country and an honour to the age.

As relates to public tranquillity in the common concerns of life after peace relaxed taxation, Florence under Cosimo's administration at least enjoyed a respite from the sanguinary turbulence of by-gone times; and that the labouring classes were more satisfied may be inferred from the apparent absence of tumult and Cosimo's popularity amongst them. After having once passed the rubicon he was compelled by necessity to annihilate his adversaries or be annihilated himself; and as he was indebted for his success and subsequent support to a hydra-headed implacable faction, he found himself forced by another necessity to satisfy, perhaps far beyond his own desires, its insatiable avarice, its cruelty, and revenge. Cosimo and his partisans like a famished crew devoured some for the general safety, but carefully selected their victims. A reciprocal exchange of crime between him and his followers became necessary for the support of an unholy cause, and Cosimo saw himself exalted, a splendid criminal, on the neck of his subjugated countrymen.

He was nevertheless one of the most celebrated men who ever rose without military glory to the head of a free state. Fairly considering the notions and customs of the age, when no means of destroying a rival faction were considered foul as long as they were successful, Cosimo had fewer personal crimes to be reproached with than most usurpers; while the permanent adherence of such a man as Neri Capponi speaks strongly in his favour. His wisdom, his riches, his prudence, his liberality, and his gracious unassuming manners undermined the hearts of men, and there was scarcely a distressed citizen of any note whom he had not assisted even without solicitation. The whole city publicly and privately, individually and collectively, was his debtor; not in gratitude alone but solid

gold; all Florence was at his feet, and thus he became her master. "*Florence,*" said Niccolo di Uzzàno, "*was ready to* "*sell herself and Fortune had been so favourable as to find her* "*a purchaser.*" His riches were great, yet not so great as the number and magnificence of his public and private works would lead us to suppose: in the division of his father's fortune his brother Lorenzo's son had even a greater portion than Cosimo for he had shared his commercial profits without his political expenses or those of his domestic establishment. His numerous buildings raised the wonder of cotemporaries and still make posterity marvel; and as if Italy were too narrow a field, he generously built and endowed an hospital at Jerusalem for wayworn pilgrims. Cosimo was accused of using the public moneys in these works, but along with charities and taxes he expended of his own as much as would be equal, grain for grain, to about 387,727*l.* of English gold, and probably to between 800,000*l.* or 900,000*l.* of our present money. This estimate however continues the expenses on to six years after Cosimo's death, a period which was probably necessary to complete what he had begun.

He courted princes for ambition, not for family alliances, which were all amongst his fellow-citizens: sagacious and long-sighted, he was as quick in perceiving as he was prudent in removing incipient evils or turning off their mischief, so that for thirty years together he succeeded against his own and the public enemies: all those who stood by him prospered, their opponents sunk; and when Venice and Naples leagued together against Florence and Milan, Cosimo accelerated the peace by using his unbounded credit to drain both cities of their specie*. Borgo San Sepolcro, Monte d'Oglio, the Casentino and the Val di Bagno, were either by purchase or conquest added in his time to the Florentine state; and Lucca would probably have followed if Sforza had been true to his promise.

* Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.

It was lucky for Cosimo's fame that he lived at the moment when a combination of circumstances began to raise a new spirit of literary inquiry and improvement in Italy and when the progress of Turkish conquest with the fall of Constantinople drove the remnant of ancient literature to seek a home there. He had the sagacity to perceive and the intellectual greatness to favour this crisis, and merits the honourable distinction of having promoted civilisation by nourishing reviving literature with heart and hand and more than regal munificence: he thereby stamped a pleasing and peculiar character on his nation and family, and his descendants followed up this example with equal enthusiasm and, far more learning, for Cosimo though loving and appreciating literature, was not himself instructed. Nevertheless, dazzled as Europe was by the Medici's brilliancy, his political opponents at Florence saw through, or thought they saw through all this apparent moderation and humility, all this ostentatious display of religion, patriotism, and assumed benevolence which, as they asserted, covered enormous vices, such as a superb and haughty disposition, and a love of tyranny, insolence, disdain, scorn, hatred, and cruelty: by him, they averred, even while his father lived, the magistrates were corrupted with bribes; snares were laid for the best and most illustrious citizens; assassins who had attempted the life of Uzzàno received shelter and protection in his house: he afflicted the country within by perpetual discord; without, by foreign arms: he it was who fomented the Lucchese war so dishonourable and unfortunate for the country: it was he that decimated the community by unjust exiles and the ruin of ancient houses, and after reducing his fellow-citizens to a bitter servitude he left them as a sort of heir-loom to his family, besides inflicting numerous other misfortunes which ultimately destroyed the republic. Such were the opinions secretly murmured but not openly heard in Florence; for they were drowned in the shouts of his followers, in the praises and emphatic

eloquence of the learned, and in the surging power of his race now fast rolling onward to absolute and overwhelming authority *. Cosimo was tall and handsome, of a dark complexion and venerable presence, and a republican in everything but his ambition; but according to his son Piero's record, which it seems but fair to transcribe, he was good and amiable in all things. "He was a man," says Piero, "of extraordinary prudence and "much greater goodness; and the most reputed citizen, and "of the greatest credit that our city has had for a long time; "and one in whom more confidence was placed and who was "more beloved by all the people: nor is there memory, in this "age, of any man who enjoyed more favour or greater fame, "or whose death was more generally lamented; and with rea- "son, because none can be found who may fairly complain of "him. But many were they whom he benefited, aided, and "supported; in which he delighted more than in any other em- "ployment; and not only relations and friends, but what seems "difficult to believe and much more to do, even those who "were unfriendly: by such laudable proceedings he made many "and many a person who, from their own or others' defects, "were not his friends, most friendly. He was extremely "liberal, charitable, and compassionate, and bestowed alms in "profusion while he lived, not only in the city and district, "but also in distant places, as well for the multiplication of "religious houses as the repairs of churches, and generally "for every good work that occurred. He was greatly esteemed "for his wisdom, and consulted by all the lords and potentates "both in and out of Italy. He was honoured with all the most "worthy offices in our city, for beyond the walls he would not "accept of any. He fulfilled the most honourable and important "legations that occurred in his day, and in the city he made "many a man's fortune by his commerce, over and above the

* Jacopo Pitti, Istoria Fiorentina, Lib. i., p. 19.—Ricordi di Piero de' Medici.—Bruto, Lib. i., p. 33.—Tinucci, Confessione.

"profits that remained to himself; in which business he was "not only a wise but a very fortunate merchant.*" He would have no funeral pomp and was therefore as privately buried as filial affection and his exalted station would admit, in the Church of Saint Lorenzo on the 2nd of August 1464, and by a public decree was inscribed upon his tomb the doubtful but high-sounding title of "PADRE DELLA PATRIA.†"

COTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—England: Henry VI. to 1460; then Edward IV.—Scotland: James II. until 1460; then James III.—France: Charles VII. to 1461; then Louis XI.—Castile: John II. to 1454; then Henry IV. to 1465.—Aragon: Alphonso V. to 1458; then John II. King of Navarre by marriage from 1425.—Portugal: Alphonso V.—German Emperor, Frederic III.—Naples and Sicily: Alphonso V. of Aragon until 1458; then Ferdinand his natural son.—Popes: Nicholas V. to 1455; then Calistus III. (Borgia) to 1458; then Pius II. to 1464; then Paul II.—Greek Emperor: Constantine XI., son of Helena, and last Emperor.—Turkish Emperor: Mahomed II., the Conqueror of Constantinople.

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* Ricordi di Piero de' Medici.

† Leonardo Morelli, Cronaca, p. 179.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.

CHAPTER III.

FROM A.D. 1464 TO A.D. 1478.

THE death of a great man is generally regretted even by his adversaries as the parting of so much intellectual bright-
A.D. 1465. ness from mankind; his errors fade with his fading days and his worth becomes more vivid as public crimes or misfortunes produce comparisons between the past and present. Cosimo de' Medici's loss was thus felt by all parties: thirty years of successful and absolute power had familiarised the citizens to his rule, and his errors were so greatly surpassed by the crimes of his followers that almost every party bewailed his death. The first of his son Piero's acts was to place all private business in the hands of Dietisalvi Neroni to whose advice and assistance Cosimo had especially recommended him; nor is it a slight testimony in favour of the latter that so far from leaving enormous riches to Piero, the family affairs were in such difficulty as to occasion the sudden demand of immediate payment from all his father's creditors. This seems to have arisen from the extent of Cosimo's public works and private beneficence in which, if he ever made use of the national funds, he certainly did not spare his own. As the distribution of this money had gained innumerable friends and followers, so did its reclamation lose them; and Neroni is accused by Macchiavelli of having advised this course from interested political motives. Dietisalvi Neroni had the character of great artfulness, but he was the *unlucky* leader of a successless faction, and as his conduct to the Medici was marked

by private ingratitude it naturally became exposed to many subsequent attacks from the adherents of that more prosperous race. In this way more ungenerous motives for the above counsel may have been attributed to him than he deserved, and according to Bruto there is some reason to believe that he had nothing further to do with it than the availing himself of Piero's consequent unpopularity to overthrow his power. But whatever Dietisalvi's real motive was, it is clear that after an examination of Piero's affairs (which resulted in a balance sheet of nearly equal debts and credits,) and the prospect of many importunate creditors rendered apprehensive by Cosimo's death and Piero's precarious health, this counsellor had but one of two courses to take; either to allow his benefactor's family to be ruined in their private resources while they retained their public influence, or to save them by exacting immediate payment of their numerous creditors at the risk of that influence.

Now Dietisalvi Neroni however inclined to bow to Cosimo's ascendancy had no idea of paying hereditary allegiance to his family; and considering himself one of the ablest men in Florence, became ambitious to govern it. He therefore, as Macchiavelli asserts, advised Piero who was neither a good merchant nor a great statesman, to demand payment of the loans made by Cosimo for political purposes and turn all into land. Such advice was equally sound either as a friend or a politician, whether his political views were selfish or purely patriotic; whether his object were to succeed to Medician power or restore his country's liberty. The blow was felt not only in Florence but with great and extensive evil wherever the commercial affairs of that city and the Medici extended: in Venice, in Bologna, in Avignon, and other places numerous failures occurred, and Piero was universally execrated only for attempting to recover his own family property and satisfy his lawful creditors.

Luca Pitti, Agnolo Acciaioli, and Niccolo Soderini were the

chief conspirators with Neroni against the Medician power: the first puffed up by his own vanity and public adulation could scarcely bend even to Cosimo's superiority; and despising Piero, resolved to establish his own. Neroni aware of his weakness determined to make use of him as an instrument for Piero's political destruction and then cast him off for the accomplishment of his own purposes. Agnolo Acciaioli had long been secretly incensed against Cosimo for some private wrong which is variously related, and he appears to have been in close friendship with Neri Capponi for a long time before the latter died. Niccolo Soderini who when young had been as Tenucci asserts, protected by the Medici from the consequences of a plot to kill Niccolo da Uzzàno, was a man of spirit learning and considerable eloquence: from him much was expected, and he was said to have been moved by a sincere and warm attachment to his country's good. All these various designs were carried on under the cloak of liberty which cut from the same false web as that of religion is of universal application, and ever ready for the selfish use of hypocritical, ambitious, and self-interested citizens*.

The odium against Piero increased daily and the projected marriage of his son Lorenzo with Clarice degli Orsini of Rome gave fresh cause for scandal; he was instantly accused of despising the Florentines, and, perhaps not unjustly, of aiming at princely rank and seeking high foreign alliances to support his influence at home. Thus did the swarm follow the tinkling sound of liberty until many of Piero's friends dreading serious disturbance proposed the exhibition of public games and amusements to dissipate more dangerous and uneasy thoughts amongst the citizens. These trifles being over, old troubles returned; Luca Pitti through Neroni's secret influence and his own inclination had long appeared as the open opposer

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 93.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 20.—Bruto, Lib. ii°, p. 125.

of Piero de' Medici: he declared most justly that no free city could for a moment submit to the hereditary succession of supreme power in one family. The age, the wisdom, the prudence, the genius, the public services of Cosimo were so many claims to respect and deference, all of which Piero wanted: he on the contrary was proud, avaricious, and; from bad health and inexperience; of little public utility: Luca on the other hand was accused of selling Florence by retail, of bestowing public offices at his pleasure, of constantly entertaining criminals and every sort of disreputable person within his palace, in despite of all law; of indiscriminately robbing the public and private individuals under a deceitful appearance of courtesy and liberality, of despising heaven and the saints and confounding all things.

The Pitti palace built on the skirts of the "*Poggio*" or hill of Saint George gave to Luca's faction the name of "*Del Poggio;*" and that of the Medici in Via Larga from its comparatively low situation was contradistinguished by the appellation of "*Del Piano*" or the plain. These dissensions continued with one slight intermission until the gonfaloniership of Niccolo Cerretani in September and October 1465, when the spirit of freedom soared so boldly over the public councils that the election purses were closed almost by acclamation and the constitutional mode of drawing the magistracies by lot reëstablished amidst the shouts of the citizens *. This was an alarming symptom for Piero's friends but he made no opposition to the vote nor any attempt to renew the Balià which had just expired, although the most gentle of his enemies counted largely on the latter for his gradual ruin without either exile or bloodshed. It was thought, in the involved condition of his family affairs, that having once lost the power of supporting private credit with public money ruin must necessarily have ensued and liberty have been established without violence, because

* Morelli, Cron., p. 181.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 94.

many would step forward to support a persecuted man who might have calmly looked on while the same individual quietly sank under the sole influence of his own misfortunes.

This was however too slow a process for the more ardent nature of faction as all lost time tended to strengthen Piero, and it was thought better to ruin him in the midst of his unpopularity *. Bolder measures were therefore expected when Niccolo Soderini amidst the shouts of the citizens was led crowned with olive to the palace, and installed as gonfalonier for the last two months of 1465. He had however a relative named Tommaso Soderini, an abler and more practical statesman and strongly attached to the Medici, who seeing how things stood, determined that his brother should not be the instrument of their fall. The folly of risking public safety by useless dissension, after the freedom of election had been restored and the Balià had expired, was urged by Tommaso on Niccolo who without any decisive plan was simultaneously incited to stronger measures by his own party until his period of office slipped insensibly away unimproved and fruitless. Tommaso's purpose was thus accomplished and Niccolo wasted his time in theoretical elocution: he first addressed an assembly of five hundred, then a more select council of three hundred citizens, but from so many discordant particles produced nothing solid and all unity of action became suspended. A proposal to investigate the public accounts was opposed, probably with good personal reason, by Luca Pitti, and the only measures carried were a fresh scrutiny of every magistracy and the repeal of a law passed under the gonfaloniership of Tommaso Soderini which had set a price upon the head of rebels. This trial of Niccolo not only proved his incapacity as a public leader but by strengthening the opposite party prevented any present violence; yet preparations were silently and earnestly continued until March 1466 when the death of Francesco

* Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.

Sforza presented a favourable occasion for political conflict and a fresh point of discussion on which to found it.

Piero deprived of Francesco Sforza's countenance would it was thought be more easily overcome if the connection between Florence and Milan were completely severed A.D. 1466. and as the Florentines had been paying him an annual pension, but rather in his character of condottiere than sovereign prince, it was resolved by the Poggio faction to weaken their adversaries of the Piano by refusing this to the young Duke Galeazzo-Maria. This roused up Piero to unusual exertion, and in an eloquent and able speech before the councils he not only defended his own conduct and exposed his opponents, but insisted on the sound policy of retaining Milan by an annual subsidy as a bulwark against the ambition of Venice whose success in Lombardy he insisted would not only involve the conquest of Tuscany but even Italian independence. The other party asserted that this pension was a mere expedient of Cosimo's to support his own usurpations from which Florence had never received the smallest benefit but on the contrary was compelled to pay the very instrument of its subjugation.

These disputes continued with great heat but small progress, for the foundations of Medician power were laid too deep to be easily shaken even by all Piero's unpopularity: the "Plebe" still clung to their idol house, those families who had risen by and still depended on the Medici were true, and the general reputation of their party was better than that of their opponents. Dietisalvi Neroni's dissimulation was not as yet unmasked, but some decisive step became necessary: a proposal to kill Piero was discussed but relinquished as impolitic at that moment and the support of some able condottiere recommended; whereupon Hercules of Este who disliked the Medici willingly engaged to support them by an immediate advance on the capital. This assurance of succour renewed the proposal of Piero's death, and the evils that resulted

from sparing his father's life in 1433 were adduced in evidence of its necessity; for freedom and the Medici it was asserted could never flourish simultaneously in Florence.

During all these intrigues Piero de' Medici was far from dormant; he watched their progress, confirmed the faith of his older friends, attracted new ones by promise and reward, drew even neutrals and enemies to his side by present liberality and flattering prospects, and left no means untried to secure a multitude of adherents. His enemies when aware of this activity in one whose infirmities and inexperience were supposed to have incapacitated him, at once resolved on violence, and life itself was to answer for such energy. He was first doomed to be murdered while passing in a litter from Careggi to Florence; then they were to strengthen themselves with foreign soldiers and so compel the Seignory to order another scrutiny and fill the purses according to their dictation with citizens who would offer no opposition. But during all these consultations in which Neroni was a chief actor he still continued his intimacy with Piero, visited him at Careggi, conversed on public affairs, insisted that no revolution was contemplated and discussed the most efficient means of keeping Florence united by maintaining the existing government. Dietisalvi was well adapted both by nature and long practice for such deceitful missions; but Piero whom he contemned was no longer deluded; many of his partisans had free access to the adverse conclave and kept him well informed of all that past while he affected ignorance of everything and by thus confirming their mean opinion of him prevented any sudden movement until he became able to strike a hard and unexpected blow*. In fact Niccolo Fedini, acting as secretary to the Poggio faction, showed the list of conspirators to Piero who surprised at their number immediately bound all his own adherents also by subscription; and

* Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.—Bruto, Ist. Fiorent., Lib. ii°, p. 125; Lib. iii°, p. 219.

such was the corrupt and inconstant state of public principle that many names appeared at the same time on both rolls.

Much of this was caused by Soderini's failure and the weakness of the really liberal party: Luca Pitti who had been enriched by peculation was no friend of one that proposed an examination of the public accounts, while the new scrutiny alienated all those who had been or were likely to be rejected by it; so that in this state the timid the doubtful and the calculating clung to old habits, future prospects, and the powerful name of Medici.

While thus determined Piero was informed by his friend Domenico Martelli that Dietisalvi's brother Francesco had been repeatedly urging him to imitate his ancestors and join the liberal cause; but though he prized the sacred name of Liberty and the fame that posterity might bestow on its defenders, he was by no means sure of them that were most loudly calling on it, and if they were insincere infinite mischief would befall the community: wherefore he advised Piero to act promptly and either make peace, or if resolved on war to temporise no more, but boldly try the chance of arms; for if the enemy began, supported as he was by crowds of reckless men, the whole city would be plundered; consequently for his own and his followers' safety there ought to be no delay lest his adversary's augmented strength should render the conflict doubtful. Piero though well aware that contempt for him had made them comparatively heedless and that a little delay was not impolitic, yet determined to avail himself of this good spirit in his followers to strike hard and suddenly on the first favourable occasion *.

The fact of Hercules d'Este having espoused their cause was not unknown, and Piero took care that not only the intelligence of that prince's advance to Fiume d'Albo with evil intentions towards the commonwealth, should be spread abroad but that

* Bruto, Ist. Fior., Lib. iii., p. 225.

he had or feigned that he had warning letters from Giovanni Bentivoglio of Bologna (whose messengers arrived on 27th July) which confirmed it; and this was more easily credited because of the well-known intimacy between the Bentivogli and Medici *.

Whether this intelligence were real or feigned matters but little; the main fact was true as well as Piero's resolution to arm, so that he lost no time in collecting all his strength and especially summoned a Milanese commander then stationed with two thousand five hundred men in Romagna to advance by forced marches towards Florence. On the twenty-third of August he quitted the villa of Careggi and proceeded under an escort to the city where he arrived safely but with a narrow escape from assassination: the whole road between that villa and San Gallo had been clandestinely occupied by armed men on the watch for his life; but his son Lorenzo de' Medici's suspicions having been awakened he ordered that Piero's litter should be carried through by-lanes while he himself anxiously but boldly proceeded by the usual road where he expected to meet the assassins. Nor had Lorenzo gone far when a party stopped him to ask whereabouts he had left Piero, but promptly answering that his father was close at hand they allowed him to pass unmolested, for the latter's death alone was required, and that from political necessity not private vengeance †. Macchiavelli takes no notice of this anecdote, which is related by Niccolo Valori in his Life of Lorenzo, and repeated on his authority by Bruto and Ammirato; but on the contrary asserts that Piero entered Florence at the head of an armed force, which could hardly be if this incident, as is probable, really took place ‡.

* Leonardo Morelli, p. 181.—Bruto, Lib. iii., p. 225.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 96.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.

† Niccolo Valori, Vita di Lorenzo de' Medici.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 96.—Bruto, Lib. iii., p. 227.

‡ Macchiavelli's inaccuracy is notorious: Ammirato thus speaks of him, "Which obliges me to refute what Macchiavelli says, namely that Piero feigned the having received Bentivoglio's letter; more especially because

Whatever credit may be given to Macchiavelli's assertion Piero without doubt had either then or very soon after, a strong force in Florence and this threw the whole town into commotion: the adverse faction hastily armed, but thus taken unawares were hurried and incomplete in their preparations while the Medici were ready for any enterprise. Neroni, whose residence was near that of the Medici, fearing for his own property and doubtful of the resolution of his party promptly repaired to the palace and urged the priors to command the immediate dismissal of Piero's followers and invite him to bring forward his grievances in a legitimate manner before the Seignory; then seeking out Luca Pitti and the rest he encouraged them to be firm in the cause; Niccolo Soderini now displayed more spirit than he did as gonfalonier; with two hundred friends, three hundred Flemish weavers, and most of the quarter of Santo Spirito in arms he endeavoured to inspire some resolution into Luca Pitti, who somewhat encouraged by this junction of forces discussed their next proceeding: some wished to attack the palace where the gonfalonier and

have compared it with other very faithful memoirs which show that the fact passed as I have related it: besides which in truth Macchiavelli's want of care is seen throughout his history. If we were to go on reproving his errors we should either become unobservant of the decorum of history or be blamed as malignant. He places Duke Francesco's death before the gonfaloniership of Niccolo Soderini, and makes Piero de' Medici to be alive after Pope Paul's death. He attributes to Luca Pitti that which belongs to Ruberto Sostegni; names Bardo Altoviti as gonfalonier of justice after Ruberto Lioni which he never was. In short he changes years, alters facts, substitutes names, confounds causes, augments, diminishes, adds, subtracts, and lets his fancy run without a bridle or any legitimate control; and what most annoys is, that in many places he seems to act thus more from design than error or ignorance of what occurred; perhaps because by thus doing he was enabled to write more elegantly and less drily than he would have done if obedient to dates and facts. As if the things to the style, and not the style to the things were to be accommodated." (*Vide* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii, p. 96.) Bruto also says (Lib. ii. p. 125) "I propose to follow Macchiavelli when I can get at no better authority; but where he wants sincerity (which frequently happens) or accuracy, I will not shield him. * * * Let me not be blamed, for I do not find fault with the author, whose style delights me and whose genius is very dear to me; but with the things he has left written."

four priors were friendly; others proposed setting fire to the houses of their adversaries; but while Piero was organising his adherents he produced Bentivoglio's letter and sent it to the Seignory as an excuse for his having armed in self-defence, and to impress on them the necessity of providing for public safety.

However favourable to the Poggio faction no government could pass such intelligence unnoticed; they therefore despatched Bernardo Corbinelli as their commissary to know what army this was that approached the city, by whom and for what purpose sent, and to stop its further progress; while by means of common friends they urged both factions to disarm: but neither were so inclined and Piero was continually receiving reënforcements from the country; many of his party would have at once crossed the Arno and attacked the enemy in his own quarters but others opposed this and Medician authority kept everything quiet, so that nothing was as yet done by either side. Luca Pitti and Niccolo Soderini now began to reproach each other as the particular cause of failure, whereby both time and means were wasted in negotiations and vain attempts at restoring tranquillity. This delay was satisfactory to Piero who hoped little from the existing Seignory but much from its successors, because the gonfalonier would then be chosen from the quarter of Santa Croce where he had many adherents; in the interim he gained over Luca Pitti himself by the most tempting offers; amongst others a matrimonial alliance with his family; and also increased his own forces to four thousand, or according to Jacopo Pitti six thousand men: in this way Piero ably managed to occupy his enemy's time until the twenty-eighth of August when a new Seignory was drawn who together with their predecessors sent for the hostile chiefs, Luca appearing for his party, and Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici for Piero; and effected an apparent reconciliation *.

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°. p. 22, 23.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 97, 98.—M. Bruto, Lib. iii., p. 243.

Here we have a striking example of the strength of Florentine faction and the weakness of Florentine government: its favour to either party would have insured victory; but mistrusting both it stood anxiously watching the event, and unable between two angry factions to vindicate its own authority assumed the more timid part of a mediator and humbly sued for peace! According to Jacopo Pitti all Piero's acts both political and military were advised if not exclusively directed by Nicodemo Franchedino the Duke of Milan's ambassador who had dwelt long in Florence and was attached to the house of Medici by the benefits received both from Cosimo and Piero; this and his son Lorenzo's spirit will perhaps account for the vigour and promptness with which an almost bed-ridden invalid like the latter acted amidst so much danger and difficulty*.

Soon after this pacification a meeting of all parties with the single exception of Niccolo Soderini who disdained to bend; took place at the Medici palace where Piero was obliged to receive them in bed, and where much bitter language and reproach preceded another hollow reconciliation: Soderini then made one more indignant attempt to rouse Luca up to a sense of his own honour and dignity: for a moment he was successful, a new revolutionary movement was felt and the city became anxious and agitated; an appeal to arms was again resolved on; the Ferrarese succours advanced to San Marcello in the Pistoian hills and everything once more looked gloomy. These mock or at least unsatisfactory reconciliations repeatedly occurred, and Piero, though conscious of his own strength and desiring tranquillity, was yet afraid to disarm, while his enemies disunited in councils, in objects, and resources, were so continually shifting, and so little to be trusted; for though unable to make head against the Medician power they still disdained obedience.

Alarmed at these new commotions Piero employed Lorenzo de' Medici and others to confirm Luca's hesitation in their

* Jacopo Pitti, Istor. Fiorent., Lib. i°, p. 21.

favour: he was now seventy-two and disposed for tranquillity; desirous to finish his vast palace; doubtful of his companions' ultimate objects; and hoping, through his promised alliance with Lorenzo, that when Piero died he should be able from the former's youth, to rule Florence at his pleasure. All this was known and worked on, and he accordingly deserted his friends; but such vacillation, which had long thwarted Dietisalvi and Soderini's efforts, became now so suspicious that along with the new elections it annihilated every hope of their party. Whatever might have been Piero's inward motives or wishes in this dangerous crisis the language which he held to his fellow-citizens at the last interview was moderate and reasonable. He encouraged them to act in a manner consistent both with their own dignity and public duty; and, without showing favour to any man, pass those measures which should be most conducive to public decorum, liberty, and general tranquillity. He advised them to look forward only to the future distinction which their public conduct would give them a fair and honest claim to from Florence; and as to himself whatever they enacted, whether to continue the government by Balià or otherwise, he would approve of, as an honest citizen eager for tranquillity and his country's happiness, was bound to do *.

There was a general desire for repose; but repose was not easily acquired in an age when life was despised as a mere load of infamy unless hatred and injury were washed away in the blood or destruction of one or the other party: Piero's faction eagerly voted for the death of the four adverse leaders, but he would not hear of blood and a parliament was resolved on. The new gonfalonier Roberto Leoni is said rather to have calculated his own chances than the public benefit†, and to have discovered that these lay entirely with the Medici: wherefore on the second of September 1466, he by Piero's direction summoned a parliament and with the accustomed precautions created a new

* Bruto, Lib. iii°, p. 257. † Ibid., 274, 275.

Balià composed of the captain of the people and eight citizens who with absolute authority were empowered to reform the commonwealth. On the sixth they were embodied and their functions commenced, whereupon Agnolo Accaiuoli and Dietisalvi Neroni at once fled from Florence as Soderini had done some days before, to escape from the usual and inevitable persecutions *.

The Balià was elected for ten years, a much longer period than even Cosimo ventured upon, and with restricted numbers; so true is it that unsuccessful resistance imparts new strength to despotism: the elections of priors were again made at pleasure for an equal period; the Neroni, the Soderini, the Panciatichi, the Gondi, the Nardi, and many others were exiled, fined, or admonished; Neroni's brother the archbishop of Florence fearful of consequences retired into voluntary banishment; the Balià's myrmidons scoured Florence in search of proscribed citizens, and were clothed in such terrors that even the very children, according to Jacopo Pitti, began to question their memory lest they should ever have unwittingly offended Piero de' Medici or any of his faction. Many people fled from the city, but this was met by an arbitrary act of the "*Otto di Balià*," who at their own pleasure summoned any citizen to appear before them under the penalty of immediate banishment, Luca Pitti alone of all his faction remaining unscathed yet disappointed at the failure of his granddaughter's marriage with the young Lorenzo de' Medici; which was probably never intended: despised, self-blamed; and with the shadow rather than the substance of authority he gradually sunk into insignificance †. Nardi tells us, though not confidently, that Luca furnished Piero with accurate lists of all his unfortunate companions; and Macchiavelli that he lived despised; and having been driven into obscurity by public opinion wandered through the vast solitudes of his

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 23.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 99.—Bruto, Lib. iii°, p. 277.—Lion. Morelli, p. 182.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.—Filippo Nerli Lib. ii°, p. 52.

† Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 24.

deserted palace, once the emblem as well of his prosperity as the adulation of a corrupted people, and finally a token of his pride, his folly, and his infamy *.

Severity did not terminate here; a few days after, some more citizens were exiled, fined, or admonished, and no less than forty deprived of their arms on suspicion of an intention to use them. Such was the termination of Luca Pitti's attempt to unseat the Medici; thus the conspiracy commenced and finished within the city and the yoke was more firmly fixed; but without, a different scene presented itself; the exiles, banished proscribed and ruined as they were, still maintained their spirit, whether it were vengeance or patriotism, and resolved not to sink without a blow. Dietisalvi repaired to Venice and began a secret negotiation with that republic and its general Coleoni (for the Venetians had never forgiven Florence's support of Sforza) wherefore he was declared a rebel in December 1466, and Accaiuoli and Soderini in January, 1467; all having left their place of exile and repaired to Venice. The son of Palla Strozzi who had settled at Ferrara and become wealthy by commerce, joined them heart and hand with most of the older exiles, and money was not wanting to promote their enterprise. This proceeding was met with as lively a spirit at Florence where 100,000 florins were instantly levied, preparations for war begun, and notice sent to the various powers, that although the Florentines desired peace, if they were compelled to take up arms in self-defence all might be aware from what quarter the disturbance of Italian tranquillity proceeded.

A.D. 1467.

An alliance for five-and-twenty years was made with both Milan and Naples; the latter was now tranquil, for Ferdinand had beaten John of Anjou and his rebellious barons, and thought by a close alliance with the Florentines in their present need

* Brutto, Lib. iii°, p. 297.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.—Nerli, Lib. ii., p. 52.—Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 11.

to detach them entirely from that prince. Nor was he insensible to the general danger of Italy if by a restoration of the Florentine exiles their republic became tributary to Venice; for with such an accession of strength her fleets would command both coasts, her armies subdue Milan, and her ambition look to the conquest of all the peninsula. Amongst the Florentine refugees Agnolo Acciaioli alone seems to have sued for peace and forgiveness from the Medici: in a supplicatory and at the same time reproachful and undignified letter to Piero, unworthy of a man who professed to act and suffer for the cause of freedom, he endeavours to move the justice and gratitude of Cosimo's son while he wishes him to believe that it is not so much for his own interest, although in great necessity, as through his anxiety for Piero's reputation. He was answered with sense and spirit and some degree of ridicule, softened however by as much mildness as could well be expected in such times and circumstances, and not in the sharper language of Macchiavelli's more elegant paraphrase *. Agnolo seeing his pardon hopeless quitted Naples for Rome and united with the other exiles, even those whom he and his party had banished in 1434. Here they formed a plan that was near proving fatal to the Medici; for knowing Piero's difficulties, they succeeded in producing so sudden and extended a run on his great banking establishment in that city that with all the assistance of his friends he could scarcely withstand the torrent †.

Fredoric duke of Urbino was without loss of time engaged as general of the Florentines and several other condottieri were attached to their standard; nor was this speed unnecessary for Bartolomeo Coleoni the Venetian commander being nominally released from that service had already taken the field with six thousand horse and a numerous infantry accompanied and guided

* Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.—Roscoe, Life of Lorenzo de Medici, Appendix.—Fabroni, Laurentii Medicis Vita, vol. ii°, p. 36.

† Bruto, Lib. iii., p. 309.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.

by the Florentine exiles at whose cost this armament is said to have been principally maintained, and whose general Coleoni was reputed to be, the Venetians keeping as much out of sight as possible. There were various reports about Coleoni's movements and precise objects; but in May he crossed the Po supported by Hercules of Este, Sforza of Pesaro, Cecco and Pino Ordelaffi of Forli, the lord of Faenza, those of Mirandola and Carpi, the count of Anguilara and several others, so much wealth and influence had the exiled Florentines and so congenial was the hatred of the Medici to many Italian princes. Venice however was undoubtedly the mainspring of this enterprise, for her enmity was intense against that family once so caressed and honoured within her walls: Coleoni as one of the last remnants of the old Italian generals preserved a sort of reflected reputation for military talent which he scarcely deserved, and certainly not more so than his no less veteran adversary Frederic of Montefeltro duke of Urbino. Both were men of learning and literature, both experienced in war, and both too old and cautious for the conduct of an enterprise that required from either side the vigour of a bold and youthful energy with rapid and decisive consequences *.

The result was protracted operations and general dissatisfaction; but still Coleoni's movement allowed of no slackness in Florence; a Balià of war was named and Urbino at once despatched with eight hundred cavalry to watch the enemy's motions in Romagna, where after the reduction of several towns he had encamped near Imola. The Florentine confederates soon collected in great force round Montefeltro's banners under Giovanni Bentivoglio, Prince Frederic of Naples, and Giovan-Galeazzo Duke of Milan in person. The two armies were nearly equal and the Florentines in each strongly desirous of battle, as both suffered from excessive expense and anxiety; but the two generals sparred long and cautiously and the war

* Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 364, &c.

appeared interminable: the exalted rank of Giovan-Galeazzo Sforza gave him powerful influence, while his folly vanity and empty vaunting destroyed all confidence and led the troops into difficulties that might have proved fatal with a younger, less cautious, and more enterprising adversary. The decemvirate of war perceived this danger and either flatteringly invited him to honour Florence with his presence; or, as Bruto and Macchiavelli assert, cunningly induced him to return home and watch the enemy's designs on his own frontier which might be endangered by his absence. Probably both; but his interference was given as the true reason of Urbino's inactivity, so that on the twenty-fifth of July, only four days after his arrival at Florence, the two armies engaged in a long and somewhat bloody battle at a place called San Piero or La Molinella in the Bolognese state, and judged to be won, or nearly so, by the Duke of Urbino. It would be difficult to determine who gained the day for both generals fell back astonished from the shock, neither of them knowing whether he were beaten or victorious; an armistice soon followed and opened the way to final negotiations for a permanent peace which however was not so speedily accomplished *.

The circumstances of this expedition are variously related: Macchiavelli, and Bruto who follows him in this portion of his work; assert that there was no blood shed in the battle, and Valori says that Galeazzo was present in it†: the Cardinal of Pavià gives a somewhat different story and Sabellico asserts that the Florentine exiles never were admitted to an audience by the Venetian senate; that the army of Coleoni was his own and paid by them, and that hostilities began without any participation of Venice; with other variations that only add more proofs to the everlasting doubtfulness of all records; an uncertainty that often makes the writer pause in despair ere he risks the

* Lion. Morelli, p. 183.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 102.—Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 365.

† Niccolò Valori, Vita di Lorenzo de' Medici, p. 6.

addition of another unit to the daily accumulating mass of historical apocrypha.

The armistice for twenty days began in August, yet peace was retarded; for Florence would not treat with Coleoni, but with Venice alone as the real belligerent power; nor would she at first consent to the arbitration of one so unfriendly as Borso d'Este; nor to the pope's being left unnoticed; nor to the grant of indemnity demanded for her exiled citizens. Some of these difficulties having been overcome, negotiations were allowed to commence while fresh reënforcements arrived from Naples, and Giovan-Galeazzo incensed against Urbino for giving battle in his absence marched off the Milanese troops to aid his friend the Marquis of Monferrato whose states were threatened by the Duke of Savoy's brother. The truce finished, summer wore away, and the armies retired into winter quarters without any decisive event either diplomatic or military; but in Florence 1,200,000 florins for the war expenditure during the three forthcoming years were voted in the absence of any appearance of an amicable settlement of hostilities. Coleoni wanted a subsidy, the exiles an amnesty, to neither of these would Florence consent; moreover Pope Paul II. who was a Venetian and incensed against Ferdinand began to take a leading part in the negotiation and alarmed all the confederates. These apprehensions were soon realised by his arrogantly publishing a treaty entirely of his own composing, and containing amongst other unpalatable things an engagement to retain Coleoni with a salary of 100,000 ducats for the war in Albania against the Turks, each state paying a part according to its then estimated wealth and dignity.

A.D. 1468.

According to this scale we find that Rome, Naples, Milan, and Venice were taxed at 19,000 ducats each, while Florence Siena and Ferrara, contributed fifteen, four, and three, respectively; two thousand only being assigned between Mantua and Lucca: so low was the last and Siena fallen in consequence of

war, conquest, civil dissension, and the superior genius of Florence; while the once powerful Pisa was blotted altogether from the list of independent nations.

Excommunication was the penalty awarded for non-compliance with this exclusively Venetian and ecclesiastical treaty, and Florence, at first temporising, declared her readiness to pay whenever Coleoni should actually take the field in Albania: but on learning that the Duke of Milan openly declared his determination not to contribute, Tommaso Soderini and Antonio Ridolfi were despatched to arrange an effectual mode of resistance with him and King Ferdinand, whereupon it was resolved to meet any attempt at excommunication by the threat of a general council. Paul was indignant and refused to recede, so that preparations for renewed hostilities were again in progress when through Borso d' Este's influence a wiser and calmer spirit came over him and a more satisfactory treaty was published in April 1468. To Florence this peace was a blessing, but it did not hinder discontent; new conspiracies, new expatriations, and other punishments succeeded each other for several months, and the exiles in spite of defeat, banishment, death, and incarceration, but almost without hope, continued to harass their native country. Influenced by the lords of Forli and Faenza several were captured while attempting to surprise Castiglionchio, and afterwards decapitated at Florence: this produced a momentary calm, during which Sarzana and Sarzanella were purchased for 30,000 florins and added to the Florentine dominions: but tranquillity was soon disturbed. Towards the end of 1468 died Gismondo Malatesta Lord of Rimini a man who is said to have surpassed all others of his day in cruelty, rapine, licentiousness and every description of infamy: he had murdered two or three wives because they had borne him no children, but left an illegitimate son Roberto, who was for the time and country as virtuous and well-beloved as Gismondo was vicious and detested. This popularity coupled with

some treachery towards the pope enabled him to succeed his father in the Lordship of Rimini which as an ecclesiastical fief rightly devolved on the church. Paul II. after waiting some time for Roberto's voluntary resignation, at last sent an army against him under the Archbishop of Spalatro; yet depending more on the assistance of Alexander Sforza of Pesaro, who indulged the hope of gaining that principality as his brother Francesco had Milan. Roberto wanted neither friends nor spirit: his wife's father Frederic Count of Urbino; Ferdinand King of Naples, the young Duke of Milan, and the Florentines, all supported him in order to preserve the threatened peace of Italy, but Venice aided her countryman, though it is said unwillingly, because her own views extended to the future conquest of Rimini; Paul however having been beaten in a pitched battle was compelled to resign his pretensions and all further designs on Romagna and receive the victor's conditions*.

A.D. 1469.

These events kept up a certain degree of agitation in Florence while the rest of Italy was at peace with a general desire to maintain it; and even in Florence tranquillity was desired by the ascendant party, for in the gonfaloniership of Bardo Altoviti a resolution passed that none who were suspected of favouring the exiles should have the power of doing so; and to accomplish this the gonfalonier employed himself in banishing, and admonishing, and forcing to a premature resignation of office and withdrawal from Florence, all who were likely to give any trouble to the government, and this by his sole will and pleasure! The tyranny of faction now rose so high that even Piero with all his moderation and authority could not, for want of physical energy, in any way control it. His followers seemed, says Bruto, more like foreign conquerors than native citizens; robbing both private and public property; abusing their official powers and oppressing without distinction every man from whom profit could possibly be extracted. To this

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 104–5, &c. — Muratori, Annali. — Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 378.

Piero's failing health could oppose little resistance, and even had he possessed all the spirit and vigour of youth it would have been difficult to restrain those by whose arms and fidelity he like Cosimo had overcome his political opponents.

Nothing is more malignant than the acts of a successful faction; the spirit of the bad flames through the whole community and involves even the virtuous and well-meaning in the general ferment: leaders however averse, are compelled for party purposes to wink at the excesses of their subordinates or lose their favour, and party hatred smothers every feeling of humanity or justice in the multitude.

Piero de' Medici, according to Bruto; and any praise of a Medici from him may be safely trusted; endeavoured to repress this disorder; sometimes by gentle and friendly admonition, sometimes by severe reproof; and occasionally even with menaces he implored them to cast an eye of pity on their country and put some limit to their exorbitant pretensions. If they were determined to continue their inexorable course he bade them remember that even violence is weak against the will of many should they once rise in their wrath; and when hated by the rich and opposed to an injured people it was rarely that any faction could endure. These exhortations fell pointless: nay to such a height did the tyranny of this faction mount that whomsoever they had a mind to ruin needed only a simple indication, given by his enemies, as one of their opponents, to be instantly run down and persecuted by those both in and out of office, publicly and privately; so that general and individual tyranny ruled with unmitigated rigour. The unhappy Piero, though tormented by unceasing pain, was still more vexed by the conduct of his partisans and the consequent misery of his fellow-citizens, and in despite of all his suffering made one more effort at reform, firmly resolved to put an end to such misrule either by force or persuasion *.

* Bruto, Lib. iv°, p. 379.

Assembling the various leaders of his party, he in a severe and eloquent discourse, as given by Bruto, and more concisely by Macchiavelli, is said to have addressed them thus:—

"I never could have believed, after all my exertions for the "safety and welfare of Florence; I say I never could have "believed that I should now be most sorrowfully yet impera- "tively and necessarily compelled to raise my voice against "those who were once my confidential supporters. I thought "that I had selected for my companions the most honoured "and respected citizens; men who would not only second me "but, (and I declare it with sincerity) incite me to aim at the "welfare and prosperity of the commonwealth. They had so "nobly backed me in overcoming those seditious and turbu- "lent citizens who with the pretence of my ruin plotted against "liberty and public good that I never for an instant suspected "the time would come when I should have to save my country "from the wickedness and rapaciousness of the very men in "whose fidelity I had trusted. And this unworthy conduct is "the more painful and mortifying, because I had hoped that "in times so unfortunate for my fellow citizens, I, (half dead "as I am with extreme suffering) should have had some relief "from your wisdom and fidelity. If I am now cheerfully "awaiting that death which must speedily arrive, it is because "it brings along with it the termination of my bitterest "anguish: yet I have other apprehensions; because I also "foresee that then will be increased the vice and inhumanity "of the wicked to the injury of my country: the good man's "hope will be blasted; if any good man escape from your "rapaciousness and cruelty; and the whole commonwealth "(Oh! how my soul shudders in saying so!) will tumble into "utter desolation! It is even too true that by the conduct of "those very men, to whom I am indebted for that life so often "perilled by the treachery of my enemies, I should at last be "driven to wish for a speedy death! We conquered; yes; as

" was to be desired, for our nation's good, which all should
" wish for: but it was for ourselves we really conquered; not
" for our country: and what none who have their country's
" good at heart can tamely suffer, you in order to satisfy pri-
" vate enmity and ruin the place of your nativity assume and
" abuse the sacred name of patriot! And yet; as if words
" were better than deeds we are become so shamelessly inso-
" lent that we still aspire to the name and reputation of good
" citizens! But what hope can I ever have, identified as I
" am with those whose prowess once helped me to defend my
" country and save my fellow-citizens, when I am now com-
" pelled to implore them to respect that fidelity, religion, and
" humanity, of which they have completely divested them-
" selves? Oh! how changed! how changed from what you
" were ere you made passion and self-interest law, and the
" infamous propensities which have deprived you of both sense
" and reason, your rule of government! Ere vindictiveness
" overcame pity; sensuality modesty; rapaciousness fidelity;
" and cruelty humanity! But I must now patiently discuss
" what may be really useful and conducive to your true inte-
" rest: yet I abandon much discussion with men blinded as
" you are by passion and determined to act capriciously. It
" is not therefore my intention to show (what could easily be
" done) that in a free city that knows its own strength, servi-
" tude cannot long exist without the advent of a liberator:
" neither will I stop to declare, what is understood by all, that
" private hatred will kindle a smouldering fire under the sur-
" face, which gaining strength from secret nourishment (may
" it please God to falsify my words!) will suddenly break forth
" to the destruction of many and burst fearfully over all. I will
" not argue with you hypothetically nor generally from the
" times, nor from offences committed against nations, nor from
" the wrongs you yourselves have inflicted, nor yet from my
" apprehensions of coming evil although you are well aware

" that the exiles have only disarmed from necessity not relin-
" quished their resentment, or their hopes, or their faith in
" the coming of better times. I will not stop to declare that
" as bitter foes they are intently watching for your destruc-
" tion; that their ferocity affects not their counsel, while their
" prudence increases their energy and loftiness of mind; which,
" when occasion offers, will overwhelm you with the very hatred
" you have created for yourselves. They will never want friends,
" because your oppressions will always keep the city full of
" desperate spirits ready for any change; and as no reasons
" deduced from the nature of the times and the condition of
" the republic will move you, perhaps the examples of your
" forefathers, and these placed in such a light that you may read
" them, may warn you of the coming end of all your tyranny.
" Others have also conquered as you have done, because in a
" seditious city furiously tormented by faction matter is never
" wanting for civil war; but as they, like you, desired such a
" victory as would bring gain to themselves rather than tran-
" quillity to their country, the gates were soon opened for an
" easy return of the vanquished as well as for the multitude
" to expel the victors. Omitting the examples so numerous
" in our annals that they would furnish matter for a day's dis-
" course, I will confine myself to one, and that in my own
" house; not so much because the fact is recent and in the re-
" collection of all, as for its present utility; for by reminding
" you of what my excellent father did I shall be able to ex-
" plain what I think you ought to do. What calamity more
" bitter than his exile could have befallen our family? And
" yet what will be more glorious for him in future ages, what
" more illustrious event than that very exile? God assisted
" him in the depth of that misery to which his enemies' injustice
" had condemned him! None can deny this assistance, nay any-
" thing may be believed sooner than God's forsaking good and
" right intentioned men; but that the exile might be brief and

" the restoration easy, none managed more admirably than his
" rivals themselves. They had deeply injured him; but after
" he, (who from conscious innocence believed himself secure)
" after he returned to that home from which he had been so
" unjustly driven, and brought back so much joy to his friends,
" perhaps you may think that prosperity made him insolent;
" perhaps more cruel to the vanquished; or a fierce and infa-
" mous conqueror such as you yourselves are become by your
" rapacity cupidity and haughtiness? I tell you no! but the
" contrary, however desirous the evil-minded may be to dimi-
" nish his glory by slandering his reputation! To some he
" showed clemency, to others magnificence and liberality; he
" maintained the attachment of his partisans with ample recom-
" penses; and by forgiving injuries (a surprising liberality of
" mind!) and adopting all moderation and courtesy, he conciliated
" ated even his adversaries and from that moment fixed both
" friends and enemies more firmly in his favour. Remember
" that when you pardon a rival you provide not more for his
" than your own welfare; because he will either be grateful to
" his preserver (for there is not a more praiseworthy act than
" preserving those whom you could ruin, and clemency and
" humanity are never without reward) or he is of so hard a
" heart that he more easily remembers ancient hate than recent
" benefit, and even then his ferocious and inhuman disposition
" will be at least softened towards the man who showed himself
" kind and gentle in the flush of victory. And as an enemy
" cannot be pardoned without at the same time saving a man,
" and a citizen; you will always act like a good Christian
" in doing so besides paying a debt to humanity and your
" country by the forgiveness of injuries. But if the force of
" benevolent actions is sufficient to destroy an enemy's recol-
" lection of former injuries and make him a constant friend,
" what should be thought of those who having no hatred that
" prevents their wishing you every prosperity, are moved by

" gratuitous beneficence on your part to desire it with more " ardent and lively aspirations ? And as it is natural for those " who love us to become more and more attached by the bene- " fits we bestow, so if we injure those whom we ought to be- " nefit the more keenly will they be affected ; because they " feel that from the source of their present evil, good should " have come. Now you seek but one object : your own interest ! " But certainly it is a brutal and evil wish, if it be not nefa- " rious, and even impious, that of attempting to acquire what " may be denominated tyrannical rule rather than the just " chieftainry of the citizens. However, since you have thus " resolved I would wish to lead you right : you have two ways " to accomplish your purpose : benevolence and terror. You " may choose between them ; you may employ rewards to in- " gratiate yourselves with the citizens ; or punishments to " make yourselves hateful ; but you will never finish, never " arrive at your object : men will not long remain unjustly " curbed by terror unless carried to an inhuman excess ; " neither are they to be cajoled by those trifling boons which " are generally bestowed (because even with liberal wishes the " means are not always forthcoming) to bear servitude in tran- " quillity. Nor can I, supposing you to be of this mind be- " lieve you to be the ' *Liberators of the Republic*,' of which " title you vaingloriously boast in order to claim merit from " your countrymen ; but on the contrary I can only consider " you as oppressors of your native city and as most inhuman " and proud tyrants, so that you cannot even listen to the voice " of so culpable an ambition without having previously divested " your soul of every kind feeling of humanity ! But now, what " is your object ? What will be the end of such cruelty ? The " way that I have shown to you as the most gentle and simple, " is not palatable ; but you are on the contrary eager to adven- " ture on that which, difficult, arduous, tortuous, full of turns " and windings, will conduct you with ignominy and maledic-

" tions to your own destruction. Up then; listen to the voice " of cruelty, of inhumanity, of your own caprice: be hard- " hearted to the citizens, insult their misery, prepare tortures " and massacres, and rapacity, and every sort of barbarity for " your country: imprison, decapitate, exile, admonish, plant a " human butcher in the market-place, fill up your measure of " infamy; let cruelty overflow! But with all this you will not " have made a road to the rock of tyranny so garrisoned and " barricaded as to prevent your being ultimately forced to ac- " knowledge that the few must fear the union of the many " more than the many the oppressive violence of the few. Alas " for my poor country! And yet how well she has merited of " you! She has exalted you to splendour; she has showered " on you the highest honours! Therefore, if you refuse to act " with sufficient filial affection as to repay her the debt of duty, " you should at least be somewhat less cruel and not commit " such crimes against her! Now, even through me, this " miserable country implores you, and supplicates you, and " conjures you: (and in thus doing she shows how you should " recede from your cruelty when she recedes so much from " her rights) she supplicates you I say; your country suppli- " cates you! If you have a remnant of humanity, if you have " any remembrance of the benefits she has bestowed on you " so bountifully; she conjures you to pause and pity her! But " because no respect for your duty, no charity towards her can " move you; and because you show the thirst of power, rather " than the zealous preservation of the highly honoured and " respected rank which each of you enjoys; try at least to " merit the love of your fellow citizens by beneficence, instead " of rousing their anger and hatred against you by malevolence. " As to myself, death is close at hand; nevertheless, feeling " too sensibly that I am not considered worthy of obtaining " from citizens so ungrateful the salvation of my country " which even barbarians often concede; in order not to appear

"from mental weakness to be forgetful of my native place and "my own dignity; I now declare that what I am unable to "accomplish with your good will; against your will and in "despite of you, I will achieve by force; and having rendered "this last service to my country and in my last days merited "something of my fellow citizens; in accordance with my past "life, and with a light and joyful mind I will depart for the "other world." Piero's auditors somewhat abashed by this angry discourse, answered with apparent compunction, and promised amendment; but they were incredulously listened to, and dismissed from the sick man's chamber without a single mark of approbation *.

This exhortation had no real effect, so that according to Macchiavelli Piero determined to strengthen himself by an alliance with the exiles and had an interview with Agnolo Acciaioli at the villa of Cafaggiolo to arrange the conditions of their return, but died early in December before they were completed, at the age of fifty-three. Ammirato takes no notice either of this interview, Piero's determination in the exiles' favour, or his severe reproof to the dominant faction as above given on the authority of Bruto and Macchiavelli: the latter though, as already said, notoriously incorrect in his facts, could scarcely have invented one of such consequence so soon after the event; and an enemy like Bruto who lived so much with Florentine exiles would without reason hardly have followed and even enlarged on these two occurrences so favourable to the Medici. "Piero de' Medici," says this last author, "as in wisdom and prudence so in resolution and magnanimity was inferior to his father but equalled him in every other virtue. In the splendour and affluence of private life, whether naturally inclined to them or that the times required it; he surpassed Cosimo. He was less celebrated, for he had less time to

* Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.—Bruto, Istor. Fiorent., Lib. iv°, p. 381.—Sismondi, vol. vii., p. 372.

signalise himself, and because he lived mostly with his father whose glory obscured the merits of the son; and also from constant bodily suffering which compelled him to attend more to himself than to his country. After Cosimo's death Piero ruled the commonwealth but a brief space; but nevertheless it was so governed that in the midst of the most bitter contests, although numerous citizens conspired for his destruction he showed himself wanting neither in force nor resolution in the administration of public affairs; nor in wisdom nor vigour in the defence of his position, nor firmness in expelling his adversaries. All these things either proceeded directly from himself, in which case he merits the praise of a virtuous and prudent man; or by others' counsel, which gains him the reputation of justice and moderation, for a man cautious in choosing friends seems naturally to place himself on a level with them, to take the advice of the wisest and best and to command himself: and this deserves so much the more praise, as it more becomes a chief who holds the reins of government, to avoid inconsiderate rashness as well as ignorance"*.

Piero's character was decidedly humane, and there is reason to believe that he alone restrained his faction from blood; yet coming, and but for a short sickly and tempestuous interval, between such men as Cosimo and Lorenzo, his genius has not received the justice it merited or the praise which a longer and more unimpeded course would probably have gained. He was learned, and an encourager of learning, and filled several public employments with great credit: during his latter years he is said, and probably with truth, to have been materially assisted in all public matters by Lorenzo whose extraordinary talents and social disposition were even thus early appreciated as well as the inclination he then showed to conciliation and clemency. The counsel and steady friendship of Tommaso Soderini also aided Piero in life and continued after his death,

* Bruto, Lib. iv., p. 399.

when the youth of Lorenzo and Giuliano required such support from one of the most powerful and influential of Florentine citizens.

No sooner was Piero dead than all eyes were simultaneously turned on Tommaso Soderini as chief of the republic, or rather perhaps as chief of the dominant faction calling itself the republic; so necessary did these people find it to have an acknowledged lord. Nor by the Florentines alone but also by the potentates of Italy was he considered in this light, so that his house as we are told was filled with native courtiers, and his table with foreign despatches; but the last were left unanswered and the first directed to the palace of the Medici as their legitimate destination. Tommaso chose rather to go on quietly directing the republic in the name of Piero's sons as he had probably done for their father, than create new disturbance and new jealousy: men were from long habit becoming reconciled to the Medician rule, and would more easily follow what they had been used to, than cling long to a new order of things however eagerly they might at first have embraced it. Moreover Tommaso's protection had been implored for Lorenzo and Giuliano by his dying friend, and he was of an honester stamp than Dietisalvi Neroni, of equal, perhaps superior talents, and infinitely less ambitious. By whatever means acquired all historians allow that he possessed extraordinary influence in the republic, of which he had frequently held the highest offices both at home and abroad; so that, says Ammirato, none dared to mount the Ringhiera before Soderini's opinion was known; and Bruto tells us that he regulated the public councils and from his singular reputation for virtue all eyes and minds were fixed on him. This may be true; indeed his subsequent conduct proves his worth and fidelity to the Medici whose hereditary succession it is evident he preferred to a turbulent democracy; but it seems strange that one so virtuous and powerful and so closely linked with Piero

should for a moment have suffered the disorders which drove that chief to the desperate alternative of recalling his enemies to oppose his friends! And yet as they did continue unchecked, we must either discredit his influence, or else condemn his character; by identifying him with the authors of these disorders: be this as it may, the people looked to him, and he to the house of Medici, as leader of the commonwealth. Wherefore, at a nocturnal assembly of the chief citizens Lorenzo and Giuliano being present, he expatiated on the state of Florence as connected with Italian politics; disclosed the secret intentions of Paul II. to bestow Bologna on Venice; showed the necessity of internal peace and union to prevent such transactions and maintain their own independence; pointed out the advantages of continuing the chief citizenship in the same family, and conjured them to place that confidence in Lorenzo and Giuliano that they had already given to Piero and Cosimo; inasmuch as it was safer and easier to maintain established things than uphold novelties. Tommaso's speech was effectual, for independent of his personal influence both himself and friends had prospered under the Medician banner in the name of the commonwealth: his auditors could be certain of nothing but strife and jealousy by a change, and of the two representatives of that house one was still a child, the other devoid of experience, ineligible from his years to the public magistracies, and though of great intellectual promise, unlikely for some time to interrupt their movements: still there was some reluctance in the old statesmen to bend before the fiat of a youth; but the conviction that he would act with graver counsellors and that they themselves would not be without a voice in the government reconciled them.

When the discussion ceased Lorenzo rose and spoke with modesty gravity and eloquence, addressing his discourse to the existing feelings of his auditors he had little difficulty in uniting every suffrage and a general reconciliation followed: ulte-

rior views were closed, individual ambition for the moment repressed, the two young Medici were hailed as the leading citizens of Florence and escorted to their palace amidst universal acclamations in which the name of Tommaso Soderini was loudly mingled. Nor did Lorenzo immediately mix a great deal in politics; he and Giuliano followed their studies and amusements and for some time were content to be guided by Soderini's councils *.

This assembly confirmed the union, the tranquillity, the subjugation of Florence, and was mainly conducive to the political balance and general peace of Italy; it placed a man at the head of the commonwealth with broad views of Italian policy combined with clear notions of his own private interest, in which the general good of the Peninsula was intimately blended if not identified with that of his family, as regarded the maintenance of its political ascendancy in Florence. Henceforward with little intermission it is Lorenzo alone that acts, not the Florentine people: he now becomes an Italian potentate backed by the vast resources of his country yet averse from war and unambitious of conquest; with deep and expansive thought, clear views, and extreme prudence, his influence extends itself through the Italian Peninsula and penetrates the rest of Europe, and he stamps a peculiar character on his own time and country. But the political position of Florence is henceforward changed; she has fallen from her pride of place, and is scarcely more than the metropolis of arts and literature and the private domain of this extraordinary and fortunate family.

High spirit, discontent, and poverty rendered the exiles still troublesome; a young man of family called Bernardo Nardi

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 106.—Bruto, Lib. v., p. 13.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 1, &c.—This account, which all native historians agree in, is doubted by Roscoe because unnoticed by Lorenzo himself: but his Ricordi are merely short notes giving *results* rather than transactions; nor is there anything discordant in these records with the above account except the *time* necessary for Soderini to have received letters from foreign potentates, a circumstance not affecting the general truth of the statement.

with more enterprise than discretion but encouraged by Dietisalvi Neroni; having some intelligence within the town of Prato, especially with an officer of the Podestà Cesare Petruccio, and backed by a few companions made an attempt to surprise that place and nearly succeeded. He and his whole party were ultimately taken or killed, and Bernardo with six others decapitated. It was a bold and desperate attempt the success of which might have shaken Lorenzo and his whole faction; but its failure preserved him not only at that moment but afterwards in the conspiracy of the Pazzi, by the suspicious caution it impressed on the mind of Petruccio *. A.D. 1470.

This danger was succeeded by a visit of Galeazzo Maria Sforza and his wife Bona of Savoy to Florence on pretence of a vow, but in reality to make some political arrangements with Lorenzo the result of which was a close alliance between them on personal as well as general grounds: and according to some authors, though the fact is doubtful, it was also secretly agreed that the city of Imola from which Galeazzo had recently expelled Taddeo Manfredi should be sold to Florence but that afterwards Pope Sixtus IV becoming aware of this resolved to defeat the bargain. Eager for the aggrandisement of his family, the Pontiff hastened before its conclusion to propose a marriage between Girolamo Riario a reputed nephew and the more celebrated Caterina Sforza natural daughter of Galeazzo, with Imola for her portion. This exasperated Lorenzo and his faction who thus saw a city filched from their grasp on which they had counted for extending the republican influence in Romagna; and it was also believed to be one of the chief causes of that quarrel with Sixtus IV which concluded so tragically in the conspiracy of the Pazzi. Another object of this visit, besides the useless display of barbaric pomp A.D. 1471.

* Bruto, Lib. v., p. 43. — Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 106.—Lionard. Morelli, p. 186.

and splendour that accompanied it, was the securing of Florentine support against King Ferdinand of Naples with whom Galeazzo had recently quarrelled and was preparing to make war *.

The death of Borso d'Este who had just been created Duke of Ferrara by Paul II. and the decease of that pontiff in July 1471, made some change in the aspect of Italian affairs; for the former was celebrated for virtues that not only spread happiness amongst his own subjects but became a proverb in men's mouths, and often led to the peace of Italy; and the latter was succeeded by Francesco della Rovere Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincula under the name of Sixtus IV. a man who materially influenced the destinies of Florence. To congratulate him an embassy consisting of Lorenzo de' Medici, Agnolo della Stuffa, Buongianni Gianfiglazzi, Domenico Martelli, Piero Minerbetti and Donato Acciaioli; all leading citizens; was despatched to Rome and received by Sixtus with marked distinction, which was not only shown in public honours and private attentions but by conferring upon Lorenzo more solid marks of graciousness and esteem. The administrators of his bank at Rome were made treasurers of the holy see; he received a lease of the lucrative alum mines of La Tolfa in the pontifical state; his brother Giuliano was promised a cardinal's hat, the subsequent refusal of which was said to be one cause of their quarrel, and many precious objects of antiquity were bestowed upon him, amongst them the busts of Agrippa and Augustus Cæsar. From the excessive nepotism of Pope Sixtus IV it is certain that all this kindness was not lavished on Lorenzo without some ulterior view, for the latter's public and personal character were as yet comparatively unknown, and only his prospective power and political influence in Florence could call for these unusual marks of attention †.

* Bruto, Lib. v., p. 69, &c.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 109.
† Platina, Vite dei Pontefici, p. 468.—Ricordi di Lorenzo.—Bruto, Lib. v., p. 69.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 109.

One of the earliest measures of 1472 was to reduce the trade corporations back to their ancient number of twenty-one for they had been diminished to twelve in some A.D. 1472. of the various changes and reforms of Florentine institutions, though so important an alteration is apparently unnoticed by any author but Lionardo Morelli and Ammirato and by them only incidentally while relating the fact of their reëstablishment *. Nothing perhaps tends more directly to show the quiescent state of Florence and its complete obedience to the Medici than this incident which a century before would have been attended by violence and revolution; and though we are not told when or by whom this was effected there is no doubt of its having been under their immediate influence.

More proscriptions followed this act, and then all eyes were attracted towards Volterra, where after many years of perfect submission, a rebellion suddenly burst forth as from an extinct volcano, and startled the Florentine republic. The cause was as follows. In the preceding year Benuccio de' Capacci of Siena asked permission of the municipality of Volterra which was locally independent of Florence to work the alum mines then recently discovered in their territory: this permission with some opposition on account of legal or constitutional informality was at last accorded and three Florentines, namely a Capponi, a Giunti, and a Boninsegni were associated with Benuccio in the speculation. There also seems good reason to believe that Lorenzo de' Medici was taken into partnership after the first disagreements and while solicited in his public character to settle the dispute: he had the bad taste to accept this task and thus became both judge and party in the cause: whether this partnership remained secret or open we are not informed but there seems to have been no objection made by Volterra to his arbitration. Disputes had been maintained from the beginning between the company and the Seignory of Volterra; the first

* Lion. Morelli, p. 189.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 110.

asserting the validity of their grant, the second declaring it illegal and null from informality and the negligence of their official predecessors. The speculation was doubtful; alum until the time of Pius II, as we are told, was not known and believed not to exist in Italy; the discovery in that pontiff's reign of the rich mines of La Tolfa and afterwards those of Montione* near Massa Maritima, (if indeed the latter were not previously known) destroyed this illusion, and the extensive use of this mineral in the Florentine manufactories afforded great encouragement to the enterprise. Its success probably made the community of Volterra dissatisfied with their bargain and caused the quarrels, for we find that the company weary of constant altercation offered, apparently by Lorenzo's advice to compound for a higher rent; negotiations began on this basis but were soon broken off in arranging details. The people of Volterra then drove their adversaries from the mines; this displeased Lorenzo and the Florentines, who sent officers to reinstate them; but even these were opposed by the angry citizens and nothing more was effected. The Florentine podestà exerted his authority to subdue this insubordinate spirit, when a furious insurrection followed with the massacre and expulsion of many belonging to the company and their adherents; a committee of government was instantly appointed and the usual fierce persecutions of civil discord and party-hatred ensued. Nevertheless order was so far maintained that the whole case was referred, perhaps for the second time, to Florence and in the beginning of February Lorenzo de' Medici accepted the office of judge in his own cause; but the citizens of Volterra probably doubtful of justice from such a

* These mines after a long respite were reopened in 1803 by Napoleon's sister Eliza and soon employed many hundred people: now the price of alum is low (1834) and about forty people are at work who excavate and crystalize in one season (eight months) from three hundred and sixty to four hundred thousand lbs. troy which is packed in casks and sent to Leghorn for exportation. (*Extract from the author's Journal*, 1834.)

quarter though their leaders had accepted him, would not wait for his judgment and according to their historian Cecena at once broke out into open rebellion: Macchiavelli says that it was after a decision of the Florentines against them, and there is some reason to believe that there might have been two decisions before the final rupture: however this may be, Volterra on the twenty-seventh of April 1472, after forty-three years of tranquil obedience again revolted.

In a warm discussion at Florence it was decided at the instance of Lorenzo (who wanted to strike terror by extreme severity, and against the wishes of Soderini) to hear no excuses and at once reduce the insurgents by force of arms. Frederic of Urbino was again called to the military command; 100,000 florins were voted for the war;* an extraordinary Balia of twenty leading citizens was named to conduct it*; from six to twelve thousand men were quickly in the field, and towards the middle of May Volterra found itself invested on every side with only about a thousand insubordinate mercenaries enlisted in its service†.

The result was a short and weak defence and a capitulation which being broken by the misconduct of a single soldier others soon followed the example, insubordination became contagious and Volterra was exposed for a whole day to all the horrors of a storm: slaughter rapine and violation overspread the town, and penetrated even to the convents and most sacred places, both friend and foe uniting in one headlong course of unmitigated outrage and devastation. This enterprise

* They were Luca Pitti, Giannozzo Pitti, Antonio Ridolfi, Jacopo Guicciardini, Giov. Serristori, Girolamo Morelli, Piero Minerbetti, Nicolo Fedini, Jacopo de' Pazzi, Lorenzo de' Medici, Tommaso Soderini, Gio. Cangiani, Bernardo Corbinelli, Bern°. del Nero, Ruberto Lioni, Bongianni Gianfigliazzi, Lionardi Bartolini, Agnolo della Stufa, Antonio di Puccio, and Bartolomeo del Troscio.—These were the leading and most powerful citizens of the Medician faction. (Vide *Ammirato*, Lib. xxiii., p. 110.)

† Bruto, Lib. v., p. 90, and Note 13. —Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 110.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 9.

being deemed entirely the work of Lorenzo procured for him deep curses from the vanquished people while it exalted his reputation amongst his own for success in those days covered every iniquity and suffering humanity met with scanty commiseration. But when Soderini was asked what he had now to object, as Volterra was gained? "To me," replied Tommaso, "it seems lost; for had you acquired it by negotiation "you would have got utility and security; but now you must "hold it by force, and therefore will only derive weakness and "vexation in war, and in peace injury and expense." As a comment on this the Bishop of Volterra's palace was demolished and a citadel erected in its place which for a long time was the only tie by which that unfortunate city remained united to Florence*.

Nothing remarkable signalised the year 1473 except a resolution to nominate fresh accoppiatori every year, in order to secure the governing power in the hands of confidential persons and the exhibition of extreme commercial jealousy by outlawing a certain Florentine cloth manufacturer for refusing to discontinue the teaching of his trade in Naples where he had settled for that purpose †.

A.D. 1473.

But though all was quiet at home symptoms of coming uneasiness began to show themselves elsewhere: the pope, himself of an ambitious unquiet nature, was governed by more unquiet and ambitious sons under the usual appellation of nephews, and became eager to advance them: anxious also to hold the ecclesiastical fiefs in obedience he had plundered the rebellious Spoleto and turned his arms against Città di Castello then governed by Niccolò Vitelli, who had also shown symptoms of restiveness. Vitelli was in alliance with Lorenzo de' Medici from whom as well as Galeazzo of Milan he received assistance which though insufficient to save him laid, along with other things, the foundation of that enmity

A.D. 1474.

* Bruto, Lib. v°, p. 109.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 111.—Macchiavelli, Lib. vii.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 112.—Lion. Morelli, p. 190.

between Sixtus and the Medici which terminated so unfortunately *. This enmity would not have long remained hidden if the pope's son Piero Riario cardinal of San Sisto had lived: he was a bold intriguing licentious man, magnificent in everything, and possessing great influence over his father who amongst numerous other benefices had given him the archbishopric of Florence. Piero died suddenly at Rome not without suspicion of having been poisoned by the Venetians who feared the power of Sixtus when directed by such mind and energy. The death of this prince for a while relaxed the pontiff's activity; but Florence became suspicious at seeing him in close friendship with the King of Naples and in order to be prepared renewed her league with Milan and Venice for five-and-twenty years leaving a place for Sixtus and Ferdinand if they pleased to join. They however kept aloof and appointing Count Frederic of Montefeltro, soon after created Duke of Urbino, as their general, held a separate policy: thus Italy was divided into two factions between which daily causes of enmity were occurring; one was the desire of Ferdinand to possess himself of Cyprus then in the power of Venice, by marrying his illegitimate son to the natural daughter of the late king. Nothing however occurred of importance until the month of December 1476 when all Italy was startled by the intelligence of Galeazzo Maria Sforza's assassination in the church of San Stefano. This discomposed Florence because the young Duke Gian Galeazzo Maria was but eight years old and his uncles, particularly Lodovico the Moor, ambitious restless and unscrupulous. Except by an unsuccessful attempt of Carlo da Montone, son of the celebrated Braccio, to possess himself of Perugia with the secret connivance of Florence, and his ravaging the Senese country until again quieted by the Florentines, the peace of Italy con-

A.D. 1475.

A.D. 1476.

A.D. 1478.

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., p. 113. — Macchiavelli, Lib. vii. — Muratori, Anno 1474.

tinued undisturbed until 1478, when the famous conspiracy of the Pazzi broke its slumbers.

COTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—England: Edward IV.—Scotland: James III. —France: Louis XI.—Castile: Henry IV. and Alphonso struggling for the crown; Alphonso dies in 1468; Henry in 1474; then his sister Isabella, who married Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469 succeeds to the throne of Castile.—Aragon: John II. (King of Navarre) from 1458 to 1479; then Ferdinand; union of Castile and Aragon in 1479, under Ferdinand II. and Isabella; inquisition introduced in 1480.—Portugal: Alphonso V.—Burgundy: Philip the Good to 1467, then Charles the Bold to 1477, then his daughter Maria who married Maximilian of Austria in 1477.—German Emperor: Frederic III.— Naples: Ferdinand.—Sicily and Sardinia provinces of Aragon in 1460.—Popes: Paul II. to 1471; Sixtus IV.—Ottoman Empire: Mahomet II.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM A.D. 1478 TO A.D. 1481.

WHILE the Medici were contented to remain as simple citizens with more extensive influence and authority than the rest of their countrymen, the adverse families could fearlessly and legitimately oppose them either in council or in arms; and the supreme magistracy being to a certain extent free, it was not until one party had completely gained the ascendant that their opponents had any personal cause of alarm: it was an open struggle of faction against faction for supremacy without treason against the government. But after Piero's victory in 1466 when the sovereign authority became restricted and placed completely in the hands of his family by the dictatorial power of a Balià, and then by the still narrower council of five Accoppiatori, who as will be hereafter seen had the privilege of choosing the priors and gonfalonier without consulting any body: when therefore supreme power thus fell into the hands of the Medici, it was no longer an equal struggle or a safe opposition: the forms of a republic remained, but the substance was absolute monarchy. The connection between the citizens and that family then lost its balance; freedom and equality mouldered away; the garb was indeed there but it covered a skeleton. Those who saw clearly through the illusive veil and mourned their fallen hopes were filled with anger; with jealousy, with every selfish emotion generated by disappointed ambition; some few perhaps with real sorrow for their country's wrongs and shame for her present degradation. They A.D. 1478.

had either to suffer in patience; plunge into open war with foreign aid; or remove the obnoxious family by secret conspiracy and assassination. For the first their republican spirit was still too high and buoyant; the inefficacy of the second taken by itself had been recently demonstrated; wherefore the third, or if possible a combination of these two, was the only expedient that remained to vindicate the country and avenge their private injuries. The murder of rulers is always a difficult exploit and rarely attended with any benefit when the deed is private; that is, when the act of an individual or a faction. If it do not succeed the tyrant is doubly armed and strengthened: if it do, a single man or set of men is removed, but the people are not more free, for liberty neither sits on the dagger's point, nor lurks within the poisoned bowl.

"Who loves her must first be wise and good."

But when tyrants are openly brought to the scaffold and fall by the solemn act of a nation; howsoever private feeling and private judgment may condemn the deed and pity the offender, there is yet a halo of majestic justice about the proceeding; a scorn of concealment; a noble avowal of the bold and lofty spirit of freedom that almost sanctifies the oblation while the unhappy fortune of the victim is deplored! Such examples are felt in distant times and climes; they are high and solemn warnings to the human race; and while vindicating the dignity and rights of man they serve as beacons for both prince and people to beware of. If a whole nation be imbued with the true spirit of liberty, and not *licence;* it will burst forth like a summer's sun: if not, the death of a tyrant will never bring it. Cæsar's gave no liberty to Rome.

The Medici had purchased Florentine independence with a price, wherefore they assumed a right to dispose of it as they listed and mould the constitution to their will: they accordingly changed the provisional authority of the Balià into permanent

power by constant renewals, and this office being placed above all law governed without law, according to the pleasure of the dominant family. Summary condemnations, excessive and arbitrary taxation, retrospective and aggravated punishments inflicted on old offenders without new offences, and an uncontrolled expenditure of public money, were amongst the many despotic acts of Medician oligarchy. A hundred thousand florins from the public treasury saved Lorenzo's banking establishment at Bruges, and divers sums to other Medician houses were applied in various ways by public peculation to support the credit and supply the wants of that family; for Lorenzo and Giuliano apparently without having been initiated into business continued the extensive money trade of their grandfather unsupported by his skill or experience, and hence arose the disorder: but this assistance occurred at a somewhat later period and more than two years after the death of the latter Medici*.

Lorenzo and his brother, even independent of the powerful aid of Tommaso Soderini, had not nor were they likely to have much disturbance in their government; not only because of the multitude of citizens who were flourishing under their auspices and who had been raised through their favour, but also from the numbers still in exile from a want of union in their remaining opposers, and the slender following which any one of them could bring single-handed to withstand so long established an authority. Besides which the great body of citizens, though often forced by factious violence into the vortex of civil commotion, was still more keenly intent on private traffic and not unwilling to keep aloof from disturbance†. The Pazzi at this moment were perhaps the only family in Florence that trod closely on the heels of the Medici, for Luca Pitti, although

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 13.—Jacomo Pitti, Ist. Fioren., Lib. i°, p. 25.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 145.—Gio. Cambi, vol. xxi., Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani, p. 1—3.—Sismondi, vol. viii, p. 57.

† Jacomo Pitti, Istor. Fiorent., Lib. i°, p. 24.

we find his name in the Balià appointed for the expedition against Volterra, had lost all public influence and was moreover too old for political struggles.

The Medician party was now apparently composed of all the ancient popolani who had shared the fortunes of, and depended on that family for their present greatness; almost all the men of letters, poets, and artists who frequented the Medician halls and enjoyed their friendship or patronage; and finally of all the lower classes of both citizens and "*Plebe*" who since the days of Salvestro and Vieri had clung faithfully to their house; a strong presumption that apart from political intrigue and personal ambition, there must have been some substantial good, whatever might have been the secret motives of that able and designing race. It might have been, and perhaps to a great degree was the result of a deep laid policy; but happy should that country be where the prosperity of the humbler but more numerous classes is acknowledged as identical with that of the ruling power. Almost all the remaining citizens of the ancient popular families who had formerly opposed the Medici were still sullen and inimical: these formed the only free class in Florence, the only class that really felt the loss of liberty, who looked with despair on its contracting circle, and not sharing in the profits of despotism were unmodified in their aversion to the despot. Many of them were scattered throughout the world by the proscription of 1434 and its successive repetitions; but a great city is not easily depopulated, and the wrongs of the fathers are multiplied in the children, as the fragments of a single mirror sparkle with a thousand lights: the spirit of party outlives much, and enough of them remained to form a strong though silent band of discontented men had they honestly united for their country's good.

Giuliano de' Medici, who is described as a milder and more amiable person than Lorenzo, frequently, as we are assured

by Bruto and Macchiavelli, remonstrated against his brother's despotic conduct and hinted the probability of his losing all by attempting to gain too much: Lorenzo on the contrary full of the spirit and confidence of youth and great ability, perhaps belonging to a higher order of genius than his gentler-minded relative; ambitiously resolved to acknowledge no equal in the state; and as the chief opposition families were already dispersed and the Capponi with the suspension of hereditary talent had lost their ancient influence, Lorenzo determined that none of the Medici faction should so luxuriate as to overshadow his greatness; for even he and Giuliano had already begun to enter into a sort of rivalry about the government*.

The family whom Lorenzo most feared and hated was the Pazzi of Val d'Arno which for antiquity riches and numbers, was one of the first and noblest in Florence: along with the Ubertini, Ubaldini, Tarlati and others they had been continually opposed to Florence; many of their castles were reduced in 1269, and that family afterwards became gradually incorporated and identified with the citizens†. Excluded from public office like other nobles by the ordinances of Giano della Bella in 1292 they were amongst those restored to civic honours by Cosimo in 1434. Andrea dei Pazzi first profited by this act, and the family through its extensive banking trade, its riches and high nobility, became so powerful that Cosimo endeavoured to fix their good-will by the marriage of Lorenzo's sister Bianca with Guglielmo the son of Antonio de' Pazzi and grandson of Andrea. Lorenzo however, with different views; and perhaps on the same principle which makes some think that money dealings should be avoided between intimate friends and relations, as indulgence or delicacy often occasions inconvenience, wished to be quit of any such associates and accordingly denied

* M. Bruto, Lib. vi., p. 203. — Macchiavelli, Lib. viii. — Sismondi, vol. viii. — Origine e Descendenza della Casa dei Medici, MS., p. 82.—Jacopo Nardi, Storia, Lib. i°., p. 12.

† Ricor. Malespini, cap. lx.

them all public honours and employments; not however directly and openly as his own individual act; but by artfully leaving the appearance of originating public measures to the magistracy whose every motion he secretly and jealously directed. All this was too well and too generally understood to deceive rivals so keen-sighted and aspiring as the Pazzi: their chief Andrea had three sons Antonio, Piero, and Jacopo, and eight grandsons by the two first; but Jacopo remained single: the two last had been gonfaloniers of Justice in 1461 and 1469. Piero had five sons namely, Galeotto, Renato, Andrea, Giovanni and Niccolò; and from Antonio there issued Francesco, Giovanni, and Guglielmo who became the husband of Bianca de' Medici*.

Without a clear knowledge of latent motives it is always a difficult task to judge of the right and wrong, the just and unjust of private quarrels, and still more so when they are almost identified with the enmity and jealousy of political faction or the intolerance of religious belief; and where this acrimonious feeling extends both publicly and privately beyond the state, and generates the most lamentable disasters, the subject becomes still more intricate. The grounds of that dispute between Pope Sixtus IV., with the Pazzi and Salviati, on one side; and the Medici and Florence on the other, which led to Giuliano's murder, have been frequently discussed without producing any clear or certain conviction. What one asserts another denies, and the same quotations which clearly elucidate contested points to the first have no light for the second: neither does it seem necessary to scrutinize such discrepancies: it is enough for history to ascertain that an implacable aversion was in being, at least on one side, and but little friendliness on the other; and that both private and public reasons existed for it, if anything could be called public in those days of low unscrupulous ambition and selfish recklessness of purpose.

It will nevertheless be expedient for the sake of perspicuity

* Gio. Cambi, tomo. xxi., Deliz. Er. Tos.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 116.

to give the most probable and generally received account of those incidents that led to the melancholy catastrophe of Giuliano's death. Bianca de' Medici's brother-in-law Giovanni de' Pazzi had married the only child of Giovanni Borromei, an opulent citizen who died intestate, which according to Florentine law made her heiress to all his property: this was disputed, we are not told on what grounds, by the nephew Carlo Borromei who claimed a portion of the estate: but while the cause was pending a new and retrospective law was promulgated by Lorenzo's influence which constituted the nephew heir-at-law of any person dying intestate, to the exclusion of females, and thus Giovanni and his wife were deprived of their inheritance*.

There were nine of the Pazzi eligible at this moment to public honours, but all their hopes were blasted by Lorenzo's influence and the very name of Pazzi seems to have been blotted out of the registers of the Seignory between 1469 and 1478. Jacopo remained quiet under this persecution; but a deep and deadly hatred took possession of some, and Francesco a bold and violent man could least of all brook the notion of obeying an enemy to whom he was far superior in rank, and considered himself equal in every other quality. He therefore left Florence, took charge of the family bank at Rome, was made pontifical treasurer instead of the Medici, and necessarily became

* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—M. Bruto, Lib. vi., p. 203. — M. Jacopo Nardi, Hist. Fior., Lib. iº, p. 11. — Pignotti, Lib. iv., p. 190.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 58.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 116. —Percival, Hist. of Italy, vol. ii., p. 195.—Lorenzo da Ponte, Hist. of Florence, vol. ii., p. 41.—Origine e Discendenza de' Medici, MS., p. 82. — Roscoe endeavours to throw the odium of this proceeding off Lorenzo by citing Luigi Pulci's letter to the latter while yet a boy on his travels in 1465. The private and familiar allusions in this epistle are difficult to comprehend; but they seem to indicate some boyish freak that Lorenzo (by his absence) probably escaped being concerned in; and the letter itself is anything but conclusive of the fact which it was cited to establish. But it is not required; for Sismondi truly asserts that Giov. Borromei's name is to be found amongst those of the Seignory for March and April 1471 as given by the cotemporary historian Giov. Cambi, (p. 407, tomo xxi., *Delizię degli Erud. Tos*) wherefore he could not have been dead in 1465, and the law must have been made after April 1471. This is also corroborated by an ancient manuscript "*Priorista*" in my possession.

intimate by his official situation with all the papal family. The nomination of Francesco Salviati, a man of bad character and inimical to Lorenzo, as archbishop of Pisa disgusted the ascendant faction and he was vexatiously obstructed in the taking possession of his see for a considerable period: this naturally augmented his former enmity and drew him closer to the pontiff and the Pazzi.

The fears of the Medici and the openly expressed indignation of the Pazzi who saw themselves frowned on by the magistrates and excluded from every civic privilege, acted and reacted on each other; and the latter's enmity was not diminished by Francesco's being summoned from Rome to Florence on some trivial occasion, thus discarding in his person all the respect usually paid to great citizens by the Florentine magistracy *. Insult, wrong, and jealousy therefore, united with ambition to goad on this powerful family to any excess; and their unmeasured abuse of the government augmented its suspicions and their own injuries, although without any apparent breach of personal intercourse with Giuliano or even with Lorenzo himself. This may be easily conceived when we recollect that Lorenzo governed with a long and hidden wand that set all the ordinary wheels in motion at his will, while they appeared to be self-acting instruments of good or evil and alone responsible to the community. "His private life and habiliments," says a Genoese author and almost a contemporary, "differed little from those of other Florentine citizens, but his name was great amongst his own people and amongst strangers; he had followers out of number; cattle, money, and possessions also in abundance; so that all the things he possessed surpassed the condition of any private citizen: and he appeared so great that he already followed the contumaciousness of some kings and princes against the Church of Rome, by not permitting the exercise of any papal rights or jurisdiction except what pleased

* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

him. He maintained continual embassies in foreign courts and exerted himself not only to preserve but to augment the Florentine rule which he had entirely absorbed, and exalted or abased whatsoever citizen it pleased him to favour or oppose: nor would he suffer a single enemy to remain in the city; and it was believed that he was striving to banish the family of the Pazzi (who were his rivals in banking and merchandise) by a magistracy that he had created in Florence of persons entirely devoted to him; and he also belonged to this magistracy. When this was discovered by the Pazzi they instantly (as is said) communicated with King Ferdinand and laid a snare for the destruction of Lorenzo," &c.*

This attempt to shake the pontiff's power might alone account for his enmity; but there were other reasons, and amongst the first, Lorenzo's secret assistance to Vitelli of Città di Castello a contumacious vassal of the church; also his supposed countenance of Carlo da Montone's intrigues to possess himself of the ecclesiastical city of Perugia, of which Braccio da Montone had once been master: thirdly his strong opposition to Salviati's nomination as archbishop of Pisa and his subsequent persecution of that prelate. Fourthly Lorenzo's intrigues to dispossess Girolamo Riario of Imola which he had received as Caterina Sforza's dower, and the belief that at the pope's death such would be the case if the Medici were not previously overthrown. These added to Lorenzo's vexatious opposition to Girolamo's raising a loan of 40,000 florins which he was bound to pay for Imola marked him as a peculiar object of the pontiff's enmity.

The incipient favour of Sixtus to Lorenzo was decided and substantial whatever might have been the motive; and Lorenzo's anger about the loss of Imola, if true, would have been more justly directed against Galeazzo Sforza; but his object was the consolidation of his own power within and out of

* Agostino Giustiniano, Annali di Genoa, Lib. v°, Carta ccxxxvi.

Florence, while he at the same time checked papal ambition. The pope railed openly and even indecently against him, and this abuse was more than answered in a similar strain by the Florentines, amongst whom his nuncio soon lost all power and scarcely escaped insult*.

Italy as we have said was at this time divided into two factions; the alliance of an ambitious pope with the powerful King of Naples had produced the northern league between Florence Venice and Milan: it was a defensive league which the king and pontiff affected to applaud but would not join, and thence new suspicions about their objects: no war was yet, but the angry looks of all parties indicated its approach. Sixtus wished to turn over the government of Florence from the Medici to the Pazzi, in order to secure a protector instead of an enemy for Riario of Imola after his own decease. Siena too was angry at the Florentines for encouraging Carlo da Montone to attack her as he was doing about this time, nor did his retirement at the request of Florence persuade her to the contrary, wherefore she also joined the papal league. The pope moved up his forces to besiege the town of Montone and punish Carlo for his intrigues in Perugia as well as for his attempts to disturb the peace of Italy; and this served as a cloak for his ulterior designs on Florence which in all cases would require the support of a strong military force.

From the dying confession of Giovanbattista di Montesecco one of the pope's condottieri who acted a conspicuous part in this tragedy we learn that the archbishop Salviati informed him one day in his own palace at Rome of his wish to impart a secret which had been for a long time at heart and swearing Montesecco to secrecy added that he and Francesco de' Pazzi had the means with the latter's assistance of creating a revolution in Florence. Montesecco declared his willingness if sanctioned by the pope and Count Riario; Salviati wondered at his supposing that they

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 115.—Bruto, Lib. v., p. 83.

were acting without Riario's knowledge for whose particular benefit and security it was proposed; Lorenzo they said was his deadly enemy and after the pontiff's death would do his utmost to ruin him, the more so as he felt himself most deeply injured. The particulars of this injury, principally touching on the appointment of Salviati to the archbishopric and the loss of the papal treasurership, are not enumerated; but Montesecco, an old and cautious soldier seems to have unwillingly promised that in all things touching the count's honour and prosperity he would be obedient to his orders. Count Riario, Salviati, and Pazzi had several consultations at which Montesecco was not present; but some days after, Riario asked him what he thought of the enterprise; to this Montesecco could give no answer without knowing the plan of execution. He was assured that the Pazzi and Salviati would lead half Florence; that their intention was to kill Lorenzo and Giuliano, and have a body of troops outside to support the conspirators. Montesecco was startled by the difficulty and danger, especially because of Lorenzo's known popularity; but they assured him of the contrary, and that the Medici once removed there would even be a general thanksgiving and rejoicing in Florence. The veteran still remaining incredulous, Salviati strove eagerly to convince him; he was told that it required only to inflame the mind of old Jacopo de' Pazzi whom they represented as colder than icicles, but being once gained the enterprise was certain. The still hesitating soldier asked how Sixtus was disposed and received assurances that they could easily manage him, as he also detested Lorenzo and wished eagerly for the plot; that he had been already consulted; and finally that from the holy father's own lips Montesecco should hear his wishes.

The plan of gradually closing up several divisions of troops round Florence was then discussed with other details, yet Montesecco was far from sanguine although he finally gave way but

still unconvinced by their reasoning. It was finally settled that Francesco should proceed to Florence, ostensibly for a change of air, and that Montesecco should follow on the pretence of consulting Lorenzo about certain lands occupied by the dying lord of Faenza, to which Riario had a claim and pretended to wish for the Medici's council and assistance. Montesecco first had an interview with Jacopo Pazzi in a secret chamber of the then noted inn of the "*Campana*," but could scarcely induce him to listen for an instant until the pontiff's consent was declared. Montesecco therefore told him that before leaving Rome he had spoken with Sixtus in the presence of Count Riario and the archbishop and had received orders from the holy father himself to urge Jacopo de' Pazzi to expedite the business, because another siege of Montone might not so conveniently occur for the maintenance of so many troops on the very threshold of Florence, and as there was danger in delay Jacopo was entreated by his holiness to assist in promoting the enterprise. The pope however declared to Montesecco that he wished the revolution to be accomplished without blood: to this Montesecco replied, "Holy Father these things can hardly "be done without the death of Lorenzo and Giuliano and it "may be of others." Sixtus answered, "I will have no one "killed on any account, for it is not our office to consent to "the death of any person; and although Lorenzo may be a "villain and may have behaved shamefully towards us, still I "will by no means consent to his being put to death; but a "revolution of the state I do wish for." Count Riario then said that everything would be done to prevent that; but "If it *did* "happen, his holiness would of course pardon those that com-"mitted the crime?" To this Sixtus replied "Thou art a beast: "I tell thee that I will not have the death of anybody; but "the mutation of the state, yes. And thus I tell *thee* Gio-"vambattista; that I strongly desire to have a revolution in "the state of Florence, and that it may be snatched from Lo-

" renzo's hands, because he is a villain and a wicked man, " and has no respect for us, and if he were once expelled from " Florence we could do what we pleased with that republic " and govern it at our will." On this both the count and archbishop instantly exclaimed, " Your holiness speaks the truth; " when you have Florence in your power and can dispose of it, " as you will be able to do when in their (the Pazzi's) hands, " your holiness will dictate the law to half Italy and everybody " will be eager for your friendship; so that we pray you to be " satisfied to allow everything to be done which may be neces- " sary for this purpose." " I tell thee," answered Sixtus, " that I will not. Go and do what you please provided no " blood be spilt." After this they all rose from their knees before the pope who promised every requisite aid of troops for the occasion. The archbishop finally said, " Holy father are " you content that we should guide this barque, we will guide " it well? Sixtus said, " I am content." They then quitted the pope's presence and retiring to Count Girolamo's apartment decided that the work could not be accomplished without killing both the Medici. Montesecco remarked that it was a bad affair and was answered that great things could not otherwise be effected: his mission was the consequence*.

But even after hearing all this it was with the utmost difficulty that Jacopo could be brought to concur, nor was it until after Montesecco's return from Romagna and with the aid of Francesco de' Pazzi who had been absent at Lucca, that he suffered himself to be completely brought round. Montesecco was received with great hospitality by Lorenzo and profited by his sound advice on the matter in discussion touching the lord of Faenza, so that he quitted him with a profound impression of his vast ability and the conviction of his being a very different person from what the tongues of enemies had represented, and anything but inimical to Count Girolamo Riario †.

* Confessione di Gio-Battista di Montesecco. See Gatteschi's Bruto, Lib. vi°, note. † Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

It is asserted by Corio that Montesecco had more solid reasons for his admiration of Lorenzo, because encouraged by his familiarity he made no scruple of asking him for a pension, which was so liberally and graciously promised that he determined not to be the instrument of his murder, and when the time came refused to assassinate him *.

Matters were now fast drawing to a crisis; Jacopo de' Pazzi had finally agreed that Francesco should act as his representative at Rome and that he would adhere to all that might there be resolved on: Montesecco and Francesco in fact returned to that city, and along with Sixtus, Count Riario, and the Neapolitan Ambassador, settled that as the expedition to Montone was already arranged Giovanfrancesco da Tolentino one of the papal commanders should proceed to Romagna and another of them called Lorenzo di Castello into his own country, and both hold their troops in readiness to obey the orders of Francesco Pazzi and the Archbishop of Pisa, who were to proceed immediately to Florence and make all necessary preparations for the last act of the tragedy. Lastly the Neapolitan ambassador in his master's name promised every support that might be practicable in so infamous a business.

Besides the great conspirators the principal subordinate actors in this drama were Jacomo Bracciolini son and translator of the historian, himself an author, and whose father had been under considerable obligations to the Medici. He is described as young, ambitious, and desirous of change; at least no other reasons are given for his conduct. The next were the two Jacopi Salviati, one a brother the other a kinsman of the archbishop: then came Bernardo Bandini, and Napoleone Franzesi of San Gimignano, bold aspiring youths; the first a reckless spendthrift ready for any change, and both of them devoted to the Pazzi. There was besides a certain Antonio Maffei of Volterra a priest and apostolic scribe, who it is said had vowed

* Corio, Parte vi^a, folio 428.

deadly vengeance against Lorenzo for the devastation of Volterra. After him came Stefano Bagnoni, also a priest, who instructed Jacopo Pazzi's daughter in the Latin language, and besides these a band of Perugian exiles engaged to lend their aid for a promise of subsequent restoration.

Most of the younger Pazzi joined in the plot; but Renato a grave and prudent man aware of the uncertain good and certain evil that attended these enterprises not only refused to become a party but retired to his villa where he faithfully kept the secret and died through his fidelity in doing so.

Each actor having received his part the only remaining difficulty was to bring them well together on the scene and to secure a proper stage for their performance. This was accomplished as follows. There was then a young student at the Pisan university called Raffaello Riario a nephew of Count Girolamo; he was then about eighteen years of age and had been made a cardinal in the previous December: a visit to Florence so soon after his exaltation it was supposed would cause some festivities, especially from the known hospitality of the Medici, and he was accordingly brought to the villa of Jacopo de' Pazzi at Montughi about a mile from the city with strict injunctions to obey the archbishop in all things. The conspirators' design was to bring Lorenzo and Giuliano together at an entertainment and then despatch them both: their first hope was at a party given to him by the Medici themselves at their Fiesoline villa (now Mozzi) but Giuliano either by design or accident, did not attend: Riario was next invited to an entertainment in Florence where every arrangement was made for the assassination, but Giuliano again disappointed them. The plot had now become known to many and there was much danger in delay, for one weak link in the chain, one repentant individual would have drawn down destruction on all and ruined the enterprise. At a secret meeting of the conspirators it was resolved to waive all religious scruples, all superstitious fears, and choose the

great church as the place, the hour of prayer the time, and the moment of death when the body of Christ himself was supposed by a miracle to be actually present for adoration! The bell that tingled for the elevation of the Host was to be the knell of the Medici, the signal of revolt, and a daring revolution in the state of Florence. It was intended that Giovambattista Montesecco should have stabbed Lorenzo while Francesco Pazzi and Bandini despatched Giuliano; but Montesecco had received favour and hospitality, perhaps something more, and probably sought an excuse to avoid shedding the blood of his benefactor. He declared that he did not dare to commit such a crime in the temple of God; it was enough to have betrayed him; he would not add sacrilege to murder and call on Christ as a witness to the deed. This was the cause of failure; for time drew short and they were forced to commit the execution to less skilful but also less scrupulous hands. The two priests; to whom the house of God was no more than the house of man, and the mystic emblem of their faith a mockery; showed no hesitation, but cheerfully undertook that murder which the rough old veteran had refused*. The archbishop with his followers and Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini, were to force the palace while the murder was doing; and thus each aware of what was expected from him, looked for the fearful moment with anxiety.

On Sunday the twenty-sixth of April, 1478, a day that dawned in beauty and declined in blood; the citizens of Florence in gay and careless groups had filled the cathedral where the young cardinal was conspicuously posted: the prelates were kneeling quietly at their devotions the priests were busy at the altar; Lorenzo too was there all unconscious of the fate that awaited him; but his brother was nowhere to be seen. The service had already commenced, the archbishop had departed with his brother, his cousin, Jacopo Bracciolini and some thirty followers, to do their work at the palace, when Francesco Pazzi

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 117.

and Bandini alarmed at Giuliano's absence and the prospect of another failure suddenly quitted the church to find their victim. He was at home, somewhat indisposed from a recent accident, and disinclined to attend divine service: with gay entreaties and pleasantries they finally succeeded in drawing him forth. Francesco occasionally threw his arms round him apparently in playful kindness, but really to feel if there were a coat of mail beneath, as in those days was sometimes customary*.

Giuliano had hurt his thigh and wore no armour; had even left his sword behind which chafed his wounded limb; for notwithstanding that both he and his brother were well aware of Francesco Pazzi's enmity they did not believe it went so far as deliberate assassination. On their entering the cathedral both brothers were encompassed by two distinct groups of murderers; Bernardo and Francesco still maintaining their position on each side of Giuliano, while Stefano Bagnone and Antonio Maffei stood scowling askance on Lorenzo. There was a deep pause. The sound of a small bell announced the Host, the golden chalice was elevated, and like a corn-field struck by the summer breeze the whole congregation bent before their God! four tall dark figures alone remaining upright in this universal bow. One moment more and the knives of three were in the throats of their victims. Giuliano was struck by Bandini to the heart and staggering fell forward amongst the crowd, while Francesco's steel, more envenomed it is said by jealousy for a faithless woman, followed up the blow and blinded with rage gashed his own thigh in mangling with repeated stabs the lifeless body of his victim. Lorenzo

* This extreme familiarity between so bitter an enemy as Fran. Pazzi and the Medici seems inconsistent, unless we suppose a decided difference in politics (and there is some reason for such a supposition), between Giuliano and Lorenzo. Ammirato does not say a word of this incident any more than Poliziano, whose account is however considered more as an ebullition of strong feeling than a historical record. The incident though emphatically told by Macchiavelli seems doubtful from the very minuteness of the circumstances related which could have come only from Bandini.

was but slightly hurt: Antonio da Volterra in placing his hand on the Medici's shoulder for a sure blow, gave him time to start up, and twisting his cloak round the left arm he stood boldly on his defence. The two priests fled; but Bernardo still reeking with Giuliano's blood rushed madly on Lorenzo stabbing Francesco Nori, who had thrown himself between, to the very heart in his way. Nori's devotion saved the Medici who with the few friends that gathered round him took shelter in the sacristy: the poet Poliziano closed the doors while Antonio Ridolfi sucked the wound for fear of poison: Lorenzo's friends, who were scattered about the church, assembled sword in hand before the brazen portals of the vestry loudly demanding entrance; but apprehensive of more treachery there was a dead silence within until Sismondi della Stufa had ascended the organ-ladder to a window looking into the church to identify them: they were then admitted and taking Lorenzo in the midst carried him safely off to his own palace. During this bloody transaction screams shouts and universal uproar pealed through the vast cathedral and made it seem, says Macchiavelli, (and as a child he might have been present) as if the church were tumbling to pieces: the young cardinal fled trembling to the altar for protection where encompassed by a numerous priesthood he was with great difficulty preserved until the storm had somewhat abated, when they were enabled to lodge him as a state prisoner in the public palace.

While these scenes passed in the cathedral Salviati and his conspirators, amongst whom were the exiled Perugians, hurried on to the palace. The gate was to be occupied by one portion the moment that they heard a tumult within; the rest followed Salviati up towards the Seignory's apartments where he ordered them to retire into an empty room to avoid suspicion. He then proceeded nearly alone to the chambers of Cesare Petruccio, then gonfalonier of justice, and requested his presence: the Seignory were at dinner; but Petruccio immediately waited

on the archbishop who at once entered on the discussion of some ecclesiastical business from the pope; yet in a manner so strange and suspicious that Petruccio, who had not forgotten the recent events at Prato, instantly took the alarm. He called aloud for assistance, sprang suddenly to the door and there finding Jacopo Bracciolini, seized him by the hair at the same moment that he gave further alarm by calling out to the priors to defend themselves. The conspirators in the chamber had shut the door which having a spring lock could not be opened from either side without a key and they remained prisoners: those below on hearing this tumult took possession of the gate and barred any assistance from without; but the archbishop's followers being overpowered above, the former were ultimately driven from their hold, and then for the first time Petruccio heard of what had been done in the cathedral.

The gonfalonier Cesare Petruccio was bound by every tie of gratitude and self-interest to the Medici, for by them he had been raised from the rank of a poor and humble upholsterer to the highest honours of the state, and being a generous-minded man his indignation rose accordingly. He instantly ordered halters for the archbishop and his two kinsmen, with Jacopo Bracciolini, and hung them from the palace windows in full sight of the multitude, while the rest were either massacred on the spot or cast headlong from the casements, so that not one of Salviati's followers remained, except a miserable wretch who four days after was dragged from concealment half dead with fright and famine. He alone was suffered to escape.

Bernardo and Francesco seeing that Lorenzo was safe and one of themselves badly wounded became disheartened and the former at once resolved to fly: the latter on returning home, endeavoured in vain to mount his horse, so threw himself undrest and bleeding upon his bed, entreating old Jacopo to sally out and excite the people to rise. Unfitted both by age and disposition for such a task the latter nevertheless issued

forth at the head of a hundred followers to strike the last blow for his house and country: pushing on to the great square he was received with showers of stones and other missiles from the palace windows, with sullen silence by the people, and sarcastic reproofs by one of his own kinsmen who met him on the way. Still he called on the citizens in the name of their country's freedom to rise and assist him. Alas! the former were charmed by Medician gold, and the latter had been long a stranger to Florence! Seeing all lost, even to hope; Jacopo called Heaven to witness that he had done his utmost for his country, and bidding farewell to Florence passed through the nearest gate and shaped his course towards Romagna.

Lorenzo shut up in his own palace took no measures for arresting the conspirators; he left vengeance to the people and fearfully did they fulfil his expectations: all who had exhibited any opposition to the Medici became objects of persecution: even those who had been only seen with the conspirators were with cruel mockeries murdered and dragged through the streets; their mangled bodies were torn to shreds and carried on the points of a thousand lances by the furious multitude: the dwellings of the Pazzi were plundered; Francesco was dragged naked and bleeding from his bed, carried in triumph to the public palace and hung at the very same window from which the archbishop's lifeless corpse still dangled. On his way to execution all the taunts and insults of the populace or slavish citizens, could not draw from him a single word; he calmly, perhaps contemptuously, regarded them and sighed in silence: Guglielmo was saved by the entreaties of his wife Bianca, Lorenzo's sister; Renato who was only guilty of knowing the secret endeavoured to escape from his villa but was taken and hung at Florence; Jacopo was arrested by the mountaineers of the Apennines and reconducted to the city notwithstanding all his entreaties to be put to death by the peasantry who escorted him.

For four whole days was this vengeance continued until about seventy persons either guilty or suspected fell under the executioner's knife for the death of one Medici and the wound of another, besides two hundred more, according to some authors, ere the last act of this tragedy was finished! There was scarcely a citizen that either armed or unarmed did not offer life and fortune to Lorenzo but it would be curious to know how many did this from real love and how many from policy and fear. Jacopo de' Pazzi was addicted to play and swearing, yet otherwise pious and charitable according to the notions of the day, by extensive almsgiving and the endowment of benevolent institutions. On the Saturday before the conspiracy exploded he discharged all his debts; and whatever merchandise he had in charge for others was sent to its several owners in order that no injury should come to them by his misfortunes. Being desperate at the moment of death he is said to have uttered blasphemous execrations which were shocking to the by-standers, and the violent rains that fell soon after were attributed to the anger of Heaven because his body was interred in consecrated ground. It was therefore by a public order removed from the family sepulchre in Santa Croce and buried under the city walls but even there no rest was permitted to his bones, for the very children wild with the common frenzy rooted up the festering carcase, dragged it like bacchanals through the streets and making periodical visits to his own dwelling with loud knocking and exultation shrieked out "*Open the door for Messer Jacopo.*" This barbarity was finally stopped by the magistrates and the dead body cast into the Arno, down which it floated for several miles; and thus ended these barbarous and degrading scenes.

Giovambattista di Montesecco was beheaded after a long examination and confession, and Bernardo Bandini who fled to Constantinople was delivered up by Mahomet II. at the request of Lorenzo and hung at Florence the following year: Napo-

leone Franzesi escaped; Guglielmo de' Pazzi was banished from the city, and some of his cousins who survived were imprisoned for life in the fortress of Volterra. The two unscrupulous priests were discovered concealed in the Badià and hanged from the palace windows at the same time that Montesecco was decapitated *.

To assert that Lorenzo was the author of all this bloodshed would perhaps be unjust; he might not and possibly did not wish it; and doubtless many of his faction availed themselves of the crisis to wreak their private vengeance: but although the prisoners were made by the people the executions were public; ordered; and carried into effect by public authority; and in some instances after going through certain forms of investigation: they were not altogether the frenzied acts of an outrageous mob; and though Lorenzo might have found it difficult to stop them; and much allowance must be made for his own feelings while he gazed on a brother's corpse; he still was lord of Florence. With respect to the pontiff's guilt in the bloody portion of this conspiracy, there may be two opinions; the most direct evidence of it is in Montesecco's Confession, and there it appears that after repeated orders to shed no blood Sixtus is content to give the whole management of the plot into the hands of those who had just declared that it could not possibly be accomplished without. Notwithstanding the ingenious attempt of a modern Italian author to exculpate Sixtus IV. from this crime, it seems clear to any unprejudiced mind, (if any faith be due to Montesecco's dying words) that pope Sixtus,

* Origine e Descendenza dei Medic. MS.—Jacopo Nardi, Storia Fiorentina, Lib. i°, p. 11.—Roscoe, Life of Lorenzo.—Sismondi, vol. viii., cap. lxxxiii. Leon. Morelli, Cronaca, p. 193.—Jacopo Pitti, Stor., Lib. i°, p. 25.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiv°, p. 115.—Bruto, Stor. Fior., Lib. vi°, p. 181.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Corio, Storia Mil., Parte vi^a, folio 428.—Giustiniano, Annali di Genoa.—Nerli, Comment., Lib. iii., p. 54.—Pignotti, Stor. Tos., Lib. iv., cap. xiv.—Muratori, Annali, Anno 1478.—Discorso di Marco Foscari, p. 166. Deliz. Erud. Tos. tomo xxiii.—Platina, Vite de' Pontifici, p. 468.—Philip de Comines, cap. v., p. 361.—Confessione di Giov. Battista da Montesecco.

carried away by his eagerness for the ruin of Medician power cared little about the means provided they were successful, and that he were not personally implicated in the murder. He was much too clear-sighted and able a politician not to have perceived and felt the whole form and pressure of the plot; and he declares himself emphatically against bloodshed while he orders a general movement of troops to support the conspirators! And even when the deed is done his rage breaks forth against the sufferers, not against the perpetrators of this crime. Nevertheless such acts were too common in those bold unscrupulous times to be much blamed or considered if successful; a hundred such murders of humbler men would have been lightly viewed; it was the high rank of the victims and the failure of the enterprise that rendered it so criminal in the eyes of Italy.

It does not appear that either the populace or tumultuous citizens in all this agitation put any one to death themselves, but it is asserted by Ammirato that such forbearance would never have been shown had Lorenzo not shown himself at a window of his palace and conjured them to refrain from violence and leave retribution to the magistrates lest both innocent and guilty should perish together. It was in the first moments of anguish that Lorenzo sanctioned this summary and sweeping destruction of citizens; but some time afterwards in order to acquire the reputation of clemency he is said to have restrained the bloody career of the magistracy, alleging that too much punishment would bring on him the odium of having violated the rights of humanity. Many were consequently absolved, but it was still difficult to stop the violence of persecution although he himself set the following noble example. Filippo Valori one of Lorenzo's most intimate advisers having one day brought into his presence Averardo, a relation of his arch-enemy Francesco Salviati, who had concealed himself; Lorenzo not only gave him his life but to wipe off all memory of the injury and

convince him of his safety actually bestowed his own daughter Lucretia de' Medici in marriage on Averardo's nephew Jacopo Salviati; and this clemency was not ill-bestowed *.

When tumult and persecution had somewhat abated Giuliano's obsequies were celebrated with solemn grandeur by the whole Florentine people who from various motives were eager to testify their respect for his memory; but the prevailing sentiment was that of deep sorrow, not only from the place, the time, and the atrocious manner of his death; but because he was of a milder spirit and gentler nature than Lorenzo and more generally beloved. Giuliano left one natural son born as was generally believed after his death and well known as Pope Clement VII. under whose stormy pontificate great changes afterwards took place in Christendom †.

Thus finished the famous conspiracy of the Pazzi. That of Cola and his unfortunate companions at Milan though it began more generously ended as unsuccessfully: they were both bloody: the last removed an acknowledged tyrant stained by the darkest and most disgusting crimes; a tyrant seated above all law and armed with more than its most fearful powers. The tyrant fell, but tyranny continued, and no good came: in a people so long accustomed to servitude no popular sympathy with the generous though mistaken spirit of the conspirators existed! A despot was removed, but liberty kept aloof! A child succeeded and the country suffered all the evils of a minority; unscrupulous kinsmen assumed unlawful power; nay, one of them even seized on the throne itself; foreign arms, ruin, and subjugation, desolated the state of Milan and ultimately ruined Italy. The Florentine conspiracy was the work of a faction; a jealous, ambitious, insulted, injured; perhaps deeply injured faction: it was more than this: it was a combination of foreign powers to subject an independent state: all the great accessories for successful conspiracy were brought

* Bruto, Lib. vi°, p. 251.

† Pignotti, Lib. iv., cap. xiv., p. 201.—Storia di Tosc., note 13.

to bear upon it, and yet it failed; because ill-timed and adverse to the common feeling of the country. Nor was there for this the excuse of an odious, personal, and individual tyranny as at Milan. The despotism of the Medici clothed itself at least in the garb of law; their crying sin was ambition; in all else they were simple citizens; and even in that they only differed from others by superior talent and success. They were, from whatever cause, beloved by a great mass of the community; vast ability seemed to be inherent in the race; and public power had been so long in their family that the lordship of Florence was almost considered as hereditary. Lorenzo and Giuliano were therefore less to blame than Piero and Cosimo for using the means they did to secure their authority; and of these last the former was less culpable than the latter. Their government was nearly absolute, and yet that of a faction; wherefore it was naturally prone to misrule: uncontrolled power is almost always fruitful of injury; but there was necessarily a great proportion of the people absolutely free from its influence and others who scarcely felt it; the circle of political action therefore must have been comparatively narrow: the great, the ambitious, the intriguing; the bold and honest patriot; all felt either the golden sceptre or the iron rod; but the universal indignation against those in any way mixed up with the conspiracy, (even allowing for the promptness of human nature to strike at the unsuccessful) proved that Lorenzo's government was at least in some sort of harmony with the feeling and sentiments of Florence, while all foreign powers considered him as a legitimate and hereditary potentate.

Like the giant Antæus, Lorenzo rose the stronger for his fall; his most powerful enemies were annihilated; his friends were up and flushed with victory; and even amongst the neutrals a strong sympathy had been awakened for his misfortunes. Giuliano's death too, notwithstanding their fraternal affection, had relieved him from a somewhat troublesome and

more scrupulous colleague, who with talents little if at all inferior, had already begun to differ with him in political feeling. Lorenzo was now alone in the full vigour of youth and all the innate confidence of talent; a rich and powerful nation at his feet, and Italy for his field of action! yet his position was more splendid than enviable; for a league between the pope, the king of Naples, and Siena against Florence, was immediately published and a personal war against Lorenzo de' Medici declared as the only means of rectifying the failure of unsuccessful crime. Every excommunication and malediction under heaven was thundered against that city and its chief and an interdict was threatened unless he and all others concerned in the death of Salviati and the two priests were not delivered up within a specified period.

The hanging of an archbishop even in our own age and country, and according to the forms of law, would perhaps be considered rather a strong act of government; but in those times when the most humble priest was amenable to the ecclesiastical courts alone this was much too audacious a crime against church privilege to escape its bitterest censure. In the opinion of Sixtus IV. a pope had the right of extirpating tyrants, of striking down the wicked and exalting the good, all which his duty compelled him to do whenever occasion required it; but he thought it by no means followed that secular princes were to imprison cardinals; strangle archbishops; hang, draw, and quarter consecrated priests; and sweep guilty and innocent away in one promiscuous ruin! These things he thought were never lawful. It is true that the young cardinal Riario was soon after liberated; but this did not render the pontiff more placable; all the Florentine property both at Rome and Naples was seized, and Alphonso Duke of Calabria prepared to carry death and desolation into Tuscany where Tolentino and Lorenzo di Castello were already awaiting with all their forces for the result of the conspiracy.

Florence was quite unprepared for hostilities and could get no assistance from Venice which protested against espousing the cause of any private citizen, but only that of the republic; for the pope had made an artful distinction in his manifesto between the Florentine people and Lorenzo de' Medici, and thus all treaties were annulled. By the intrigues of Naples Genoa had revolted from Milan, under the dominion of which however it had been again reduced, and the disturbances of this last state from the ambition of the young duke's uncles rendered the Duchess Bona powerless as regarded Florence*. On the first of June a bull of excommunication was published which doomed the whole Florentine people to perdition unless Lorenzo, the gonfalonier, the priors and the "Otto di Balia" with all their assistants were delivered over to the ecclesiastical courts to suffer for the enormity of their recent crimes: a second anathema was thundered against them in July when Cardinal Riario had returned safe to Rome, which interdicted all communication with the faithful, dissolved their existing alliances, forbid new ones, and prohibited any condottiere to enter their service.

The Florentines who had generously and unanimously made Lorenzo's cause their own, replied with some dignity to the pontiff's violence. "You say," replied they, "that our liberty "is dear to you, that Lorenzo is a tyrant, and you command "us to expel him: but how are we freemen if thus compelled "to obey your commands? You call him tyrant: the majority "of Florentines call him their defender: nor has he a supe- "rior amongst us in religion and true piety." After touching on the various incidents of the conspiracy, and their careful preservation of young Riario's life; and asking if these are the causes of his anger? they finish by reminding the pope who he was and what was his true office, and then boldly declare that the republic would fight manfully for religion, Lorenzo, and for liberty! The interdict after having been declared unjust

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 121.

by the most learned doctors of Florence and Pisa was cast aside unheeded, every religious function proceeded as usual and a synod of the Florentine clergy which was held in the cathedral to answer the pontiff on the twenty-third of July 1478 under the auspices of Gentile d' Urbino Bishop of Arezzo, proved itself fully a match for his holiness in violence of language and unmeasured vituperation *. The Florentines appealed to a general council; they published the Confession of Montesecco, in order to prove the pontiff's acquiescence in the plot, and sent it with their appeal to the emperor the king of France and other Christian powers, while they showed their anxiety for Lorenzo's personal safety by voting him a body-guard of twelve Florentine citizens †.

The principal Christian potentates at once espoused the cause of Florence and Lorenzo, whom they considered as its lawful sovereign; and as far as strong diplomatic expostulations availed were strenuous in their efforts to restore tranquillity. Louis XI. sent Philip de Comines to strengthen them with the name of France, and he was of some service, but the absence of military support lessened his influence with the pontiff ‡. Ambassadors from the Emperor Frederick III. and the King of Hungary arrived at the same period on their way to Rome, and by their advice the republic also sent an embassy to aid in the conclusion of a peace, but with so little effect that their ambassador narrowly escaped imprisonment in the Castle of St. Angelo. On the 13th of June a Balìa of war was created, consisting of Lorenzo, Tommaso Soderini, Guic-

* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Bruto, Lib. vii., p. 283, 285.—Roscoe, App. xxvii. —Macchiavelli, Lib. viii., &c. If the notice of this synod by Macchiavelli and more especially by Lami (*Antichità di Firenze*, Preface, p. 135) wanted any confirmation it is supplied by Pignotti (*Storia di Toscana*, Lib. iv., cap. xiv., p. 208, note). Though Stanislao Gatteschi the translator of Bruto still doubts it. (Vide *Storia Fiorentina*, Lib. vii., p. 282, note 4.)

† Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 74.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 123.

‡ Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 120.—Mem. de Phil. de Comines, Lib. vi., cap. v.

ciardini, Gianfiglazzi, Minerbetti, Buongirolami, Lioni, Serristori, Antonio di Dino and Niccolo Fedini, all thorough partisans of the Medici, who exerted themselves in making every military and diplomatic preparation that the sudden nature of the emergency would admit: Pier Filippo Pandolfini was despatched to Venice, Girolamo Morelli to Milan to engage those states; and were successful in everything but military aid. Frontier towns were strengthened; agents despatched into Lombardy with unlimited credit to engage troops and generals; and ere long Niccolo Orsino, Count of Pitigliano, Ridolfo Gonzaga, brother of the Marquis of Mantua, and his two sons; besides other condottieri became Florentine soldiers. The two Marchesi Malespini were ordered to guard the Genoese border; Francesco Soderini finally succeeded in attaching Venice to the league and under Galeotto Pico Lord of Mirandola a body of auxiliaries besides some Milanese detachments and the Florentine levies as they joined; were marched against the Dukes of Calabria and Urbino, Costanzo Sforza of Pesaro, and Roberto Malatesta of Rimini; all under the guidance of the Florentine commissary Jacopo Guicciardini. The Florentines far inferior in numbers to the enemy, and not knowing on which side to expect an attack concentrated most of their forces in the neighbourhood of Poggibonzi then called Poggio Imperiale; but here the number and variety of troops and independent condottieri destroyed all general subordination to the Florentine commissary, and the chief command was offered to Hercules Duke of Ferrara. This was contrary to the advice of Venice, because little vigour could be expected from this general's exertions against his own brother-in-law Alphonso Duke of Calabria; nor was it until the end of August that the agreement after great difficulty was completed*.

Hostilities had begun early in July; the Florentine territory

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 126.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 82.

had been ravaged with the usual barbarities; Radda, Rencine, and Castellina had been invested and taken, though as Philip de Comines tells us much less skilfully and rapidly than the French would have done, but in the management of an army, its commissariat, discipline, and so forth, he acknowledges that the Italians were superior *. The Duke of Ferrara joined the army towards the middle of September, but not yet as general, and without any benefit to the Florentines: the delivery of the truncheon of command was deferred by the astrologers until the twenty-seventh of September at a certain hour and minute which did not however prove fortunate; he was either faithless or devoid of military talent and let the enemy take Cacchiano and besiege Monte San Sovino which commanded the entrance to the plains of Arezzo and Cortona, the Val-di-Chiana and the vales of Ambra and upper Arno, and all this while he was waiting for the lucky moment of command †. His whole conduct afterwards was either vacillating or treacherous; he was in continual disputes with his officers and the Florentine commissary; he kept aloof from the enemy; he granted them an advantageous truce and even allowed them to continue the siege of San Sovino during the eight days that it lasted, thus exhibiting every sign of imbecility or downright treachery. He refused altogether to fight although he had ninety-four squadrons and the Duke of Urbino a hundred and nine, as they then began to count their cavalry, of about seventy-five men each. San Sovino surrendered on the eighth of November, and its capture insuring good winter quarters in the neighbourhood, the papal army retired for that season to a position between Foiano, Lucignano, and Asinalunga on the Senese frontier. The Duke of Ferrara quartered his troops between L'Olmo and Pulicciano behind the Chiana and thus finished his disgraceful course of conduct ‡.

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. vi., cap. v. † Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 128.
‡ Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 130.

Florence was in considerable agitation, for while thus beleagured in the south, the King of Naples raised another enemy against her in the west in the person of Robert of San Severino a Milanese exile who had been instrumental in the revolt of Genoa, but was expelled in consequence of the Duchess Bona of Milan's timely and politic reconciliation with that republic *. Ferdinand had also tried to excite Pistoia to revolt, and great apprehensions were entertained of Lucca while Pisa was threatened up to the very ramparts after all her territory had been overrun by the enemy †. To watch the conduct and confirm the friendship of Lucca, Piero di Gino di Neri Capponi was kept almost constantly in that city with orders to comply with every wish of the citizens, while great anxiety was suffered and measures taken for the safety of three large galeases worth 300,000 florins that were daily expected in port, and the loss of which would have a material influence on the war.

The same ten were reëstablished as a Balià for another six months and Tommaso Soderini, though now old and infirm, was despatched to arrange a plan for the next campaign with the Venetians. The memorable year 1478 finished in these and other preparations; early in the summer of that year Donato Acciaioli a man of great talent and learning had been intrusted with the conduct of an embassy to France but died at Milan on his way and Guidantonio Vespucci was charged with the mission in his place, this was answered by six French ambassadors who made their public entry into Florence on the tenth of January 1479, with orders to proclaim the king of France's adhesion to Florence unless the pope ceased from war: thus instructed they departed for Rome followed by an imperial embassy to support their efforts for restoring the peace of Italy ‡.

A.D. 1479.

* Brato, Lib. vii., p. 293. † Ibid., p. 297.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 133.
‡ Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 131.

The war did not entirely cease even during the depth of winter: San Severino assembled a large body of troops at Chiaveri, entered Lunigiana, crossed the Magra, and was severely repulsed in an attack on Sarzana by the garrison under Bongianni Gianfiglazzi: about the same time the neighbouring Swiss stirred up by Ferdinand poured down from their mountains on Bellinzona but were driven back by reënforcements from Milan, and would have been completely routed if a panic fear, occasioned by a runaway mule, had not thrown the ducal army into confusion of which the retreating Swiss instantly availed themselves and gained a victory *.

This was not the only or the greatest misfortune that happened to Milan; the quarrels of the reigning family produced more and deeper woe than all her other enemies. Francesco Sforza left six legitimate sons of whom Sforza Duke of Bari in the kingdom of Naples, and Lodovico surnamed "Il Moro" were in consequence of a family dispute exiled to France, whence they returned to Milan at Galeazzo's death. They were not long in quarrelling with the Duchess Bona of Savoy and her ministers, the chief of whom was Cecco Simonetta formerly Francesco Sforza's secretary. These differences were alternately made up and renewed, until the regency tired of the contest exiled Sforza to his duchy of Bari, Lodovico to Pisa, Ascanio to Perugia, and Ottaviano a youth of eighteen was drowned while attempting to cross the Adda in his flight from Milan; Filippo being the only one who gave no cause of offence. About this period Lodovico broke his boundaries and went to Lucca, and the duke of Bari at the same moment appeared at Piombino with considerable treasure; both movements giving great alarm at Florence; nor was this lessened when certain conditions of peace were offered by the still incensed pontiff which were too haughty and intolerable to be listened to. On the contrary, in conjunction with their allies an appeal to a

* Corio, Stor. Milanese, Parte vi., fol. 429.

general council was intimated and a resolution taken to follow up the war with the utmost vigour as the only means of securing an honourable peace. The Venetians were especially requested to send Count Charles of Montone and Diefebo d' Anguillara as commanders into Tuscany; the former being a natural enemy of the pope in consequence of his hereditary claims on Perugia as heir to Braccio di Montone, and the latter a personal enemy of Ferdinand, it was therefore expected that they would both enter most heartily into the cause of Florence. Venice having just concluded a treaty with Constantinople was enabled to comply; France promised to treat all the Genoese merchants in Lyon as enemies; and even Lucca, which had hitherto more than leaned towards the papal confederacy, now began to change. Roberto Malatesta also as well as Costanzo Sforza lord of Pesaro, who had previously been enemies, were engaged by Florence along with Antonello da Forlì and many other great and leading condottieri, and notwithstanding that Lodovico Sforza and the duke of Milan's other uncles had joined San Severino in Lunigiana, where they were besieging the Marquis of Malespina at Panzano, that government promised to send the Marquis of Mantua himself to the assistance of Florence, and he in fact joined the Duke of Ferrara in May. Lunigiana now became the principal seat of war until these princes drove San Severino across the Magra.

Two armies besides that of Lunigiana were formed in June, one at Poggio Imperiale to act on the defensive under the Duke and Marquis; the other to make an active war on the side of Perugia; and this was to be commanded in chief by Carlo da Montone with Roberto of Rimini and other leaders of Romagna; but Carlo fell sick and died in June at Cortona: Malatesta succeeded him and vigorously pursuing the war defeated the enemy under Matteo da Capua and the Prefect of Rome in a pitched battle at a place called Montesperello by the lake of Thrasemene on the seventeenth of August 1479. Meanwhile Roberto Sanse-

verino and Lodovico Sforza leaving Lunigiana had made an irruption into the Milanese dominion: this brought the Duke of Ferrara from Poggio Imperiale to oppose them, leaving his brother Sigismond in command of the army with orders to join that of Perugia. This was not done, but by Costanzo Sforza's counsel the troops from Lunigiana, having no enemy in front, were brought up instead, while a detachment from the papal army which had moved on Poggio was despatched under Matteo di Capua into Romagna. The Duke of Ferrara's absence destroyed all subordination; Sigismond of Este and Costanzo Sforza were soon in high dispute and the latter on hearing of Matteo di Capua's movement finally departed, to protect his own estates in Romagna. Profiting by all this the enemy suddenly appeared on the Arbia and moving rapidly forward attacked and carried the Florentine camp at Poggio on the seventh of September: Poggibonzi was immmediately invested, the country overrun and Certaldo plundered; an indecisive battle was afterwards fought at Gambassi, and Poggibonzi surrendered on the twenty-fourth. Colle was next attacked by the whole force of the enemy; succours were thrown in; honours and rewards given and promised to the people, reënforcements on both sides rendered the struggle obstinate, until after sustaining four desperate assaults on four different days, and making great havoc amongst the papal troops, Colle with all its defences ruined, was forced to capitulate on the fourteenth November 1479. Meanwhile Amoratto and Jacomazzo Torelli with Sanseverino passed into Romagna and alarmed all the allies of Florence by threatening Bologna, Faenza, Rimini and Pesaro: afterwards collecting at Imola they sent detachments amongst the hills as far as Firenzuola and kept all that frontier in apprehension.

Lodovico Sforza had ere this made his peace with the Duchess of Milan and thus gained the first sure step to his own and his country's destruction: this intelligence depressed the Florentines who could now no longer depend on Milanese

aid, and even the Venetians had suddenly taken fright about a war which had just broken out between the Turks and Hungary. Murmurs began in Florence but were as yet suppressed by the retirement of the Romagnian army to Imola, the Duke of Calabria to Siena, and Frederic of Urbino to Viterbo: the Florentines established their winter quarters about Arezzo, the Venetian auxiliaries round Pisa, and the Milanese returned to Lombardy; but on the twenty-fourth of November through the mediation of France a truce was offered by the pope and gladly accepted by Florence *.

There was a gloomy prospect without the walls, sullen discontent within and murmurs continually increasing; until at last Lorenzo was roughly told by Girolamo Morelli one of the staunchest of his party, and in public council too, that Florence was tired of war and would not suffer interdict and excommunication merely to uphold the Medici so that it behoved him at once to think of peace †. Fearing to try the patience of his fellow-citizens too severely if hostilities were to continue through the coming year, Lorenzo resolved to make use of the existing truce as a means for permanent tranquillity. After having by a secret correspondence with the Neapolitan admiral, then off the Tuscan coast, secured an unmolested passage to Naples; and after having with equal caution obtained a safe-conduct from both pope and king, (although to allow the latter more credit for magnanimity, and himself the appearance of greater devotion to his country, he seemed to risk his own safety) he assembled a council of the principal citizens on the fifth of December and addressed them on the state of the country and his own intentions ‡: dissatisfaction was great and general; long harassed by all the evils of war the citizens hailed this short respite of a three months' truce as a beam of sunshine the harbinger of better times, so that when Lorenzo and the leading chiefs

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 130-142.
† Jacopo Nardi, Storie Fiorentine, Lib. i°, p. 12.
‡ Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 143.—Jacopo Pitti, Stor. Fior., Lib. i°, p. 25.

talked of renewing the war they were badly received and universally frowned on by the community. Grievances were loudly complained of not only in private circles, where in so free a community no tongue was ever much restrained or feared chastisement; but also in the public councils, and moreover directed pointedly against the Seignory and Lorenzo de' Medici even to their very faces. The citizens, it was asserted, were drained to their last penny and the public treasure no less exhausted without any proportionate advantage, but on the contrary a series of unmodified disasters; and more than this, by the timidity, or cowardice, or more properly the knavery and avarice of condottieri whose interest was to maintain themselves at their employers' expense; not only many towns had been lost to the republic but some of its best friends disgusted; so that it became difficult to say whether the city had suffered most from scorn, injury, or ignominy. Ferocious in camp, cowardly in the field; more éager for plunder than glory or victory, and more rapacious in dividing the spoil than intrepid in gaining it, the soldiers were a scourge to the country that employed them. The commanders were weak, indulgent to the vices of their men, and consequently unable to maintain their own position or the discipline of war amongst these insolent and audacious followers: vain of their pompous titles, sordid, illiberal, they differed in nothing but rank and ancestry from the vulgar crowd of their soldiers; and the result of the war exhibited the little skill experience or military virtue they possessed. They allowed their troops, gorged as they were with plunder, to break into ruffianly brawls amongst themselves, with unfolded banners and almost in military order; and when it became necessary to face the common enemy they dared not stand his attack, but shamefully throwing down their weapons not only abandoned their ill-gotten plunder but even their own proper baggage to his mercy. With such troops so managed war became as dangerous as absurd, and peace

indispensable, both for commercial enterprise and public good.

All this was heard with uneasiness by Lorenzo who in a short address, after thanking his fellow-citizens for their sympathy and support, and the guard that by their favour attended his person, reminded them of the pontiff's declaration that the war was waged solely against him Lorenzo de' Medici, and that therefore he was bound if possible to put an end to it; that it became necessary to seek the favour and friendship of Sixtus or Ferdinand and that the latter who had no cause of personal hatred was the more eligible: he therefore announced his determination to proceed at once to Naples and putting himself in the power of their enemies either bring back peace and salvation to his country or remain and suffer for her sake*.

Lorenzo's proceeding appeared patriotic, bold, and dangerous; and it partook in some measure, if the faithless character of that age be considered, of all these qualities, but not to the extent exhibited. The fate of Jacomo Piccinino whom Ferdinand had put to death a short time before in despite of all safeguards, was in everybody's mind, and Lorenzo's romantic courage was in consequence lauded to the skies; but Piccinino was a simple condottiere, Lorenzo a powerful ruler; the former left none to revenge him, none that his murderer feared; but the latter would leave a powerful and indignant nation to punish his betrayer and vindicate the sacred character of ambassador with which it had invested him. Lorenzo therefore ran but little risk, and this little he took care to diminish by his secret intelligence with the enemy, whose counsel and invitation, backed by the Duke of Ferrara, would appear to have previously made him determine on so wise and politic

* Bruto, Lib. vii., pp. 319-29.—Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., pp. 141-3. This is the substance of Ammirato's version of Lorenzo's speech which perhaps might have been addressed to a meeting of his immediate friends, but if publicly spoken to the councils the letter from San Miniato would hardly have been written or even necessary: indeed it seems to prove that he had not previously explained himself, at least publicly.

an act; this the following letter preserved by Malavolti will go far to prove, independent of other narratives. It is dated from Florence the sixth of December 1479, and addressed to the Dukes of Calabria and Urbino in these words. "My most "illustrious lords. I am at this moment on the point of "departure for Pisa and thence to Leghorn according to the "order given, for the purpose of transferring myself to the "feet of the king's majesty. I leave things here in good order "and in a way that I hope to find them as I leave them; and "it appears to me to be my duty instantly to give this notice "to your excellencies under whose auspices and counsel with "right good-will I take this resolution. I have accredited "M. Francesco Gaddi, and to-morrow he quits this to join "your excellencies and proceed forward according to your ex- "cellencies' opinion; because he has a free commission from "me to do all that may seem good to your illustrious lordships; "and he has no other instruction from me save what your "excellencies may give him. Your lordships have now added "to your other cares also that of my affairs which I have freely "put into your hands on account of the great confidence that "I think I may place in you, which is certainly such as now ren- "ders it superfluous for me to recommend my business because "it has become that of your excellencies, to whom I recom- "mend myself. "From your excellencies' servant,

"Florence vi December 1479." "LORENZO OF MEDICIS." *

The way being thus cleared Lorenzo departed for Pisa after recommending the care of the republic to Tommaso Soderini then gonfalonier of justice: from San Miniato he wrote a formal letter to the Seignory with his reasons for thus acting, and they in return conferred upon him the title of Orator or Ambassador of the Florentine people with full powers to do

* Bruto, Lib. vii., p. 329.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 123.—Orl. Malavolti, Ist. di Siena, Lib. iv., Parte iii^a, fol. 75-8.—Muratori, Annali, Anno 1479.

all he might deem expedient for the republic. His letter to the Seignory of Florence is as follows:

"Exalted Seigniors. If I have not otherwise explained to "your highnesses the reason of my departure it has not been "from presumption but because I thought that in the existing "troubles of your city, deeds and not words are most required: "it seems to me that that city desires and has the greatest "need of peace; and as all other means have failed it seems "better to place myself in some danger than allow the whole "community to remain so. Wherefore I have resolved with "your highnesses' permission to repair at once to Naples; "because I being the person who am principally persecuted by "our enemies, I may perhaps be also the means, by delivering "myself into their hands, of restoring peace to your common-"wealth. I consider one of two things to be certain: that is; "either the king's majesty loves this city as he has declared "and as some have believed, rather seeking our friendship by "means of war than to deprive us of liberty: or verily his "majesty desires the ruin of our republic. If his disposition "is favourable there is no better way of proving it than to "place myself voluntarily in his power; and this I will ven-"ture to say is the only method of obtaining peace on honour-"able conditions. And if on the contrary his majesty wants "to deprive us of liberty, I then think it will be well to ascer-"tain it quickly, and rather with injury to one than all; and I "am well satisfied to be that one, for two reasons. The first "because I, being the person that am chiefly persecuted by "our enemies, will the more easily be able to test the king's "intention, as it may be that they seek nothing further than "my individual ruin. The other is that I having had more "honour and consideration in the city, not only beyond my "merits but perhaps more than any other citizen of our own "time; I therefore consider myself more bound than all the "rest to act for my country, even at the peril of my life. With

" this good disposition I leave you: perhaps it may be God's " will that as this war began with mine and my brother's " blood it may also finish by my hands: and I only wish that " my life or death, my prosperity and adversity may ever be " for the people's benefit. I will therefore follow up my reso- " lution, which if it succeed according to my wishes and expec- " tations I shall have the satisfaction of benefiting my country " while I preserve myself. If however, evil overtake me I " shall complain the less, it being for my country's good as it " necessarily must be. For if our adversaries want only me " they will have me voluntarily in their power; and if they " are aiming at more it will be made manifest. To me it " seems certain that all our citizens will combine in defence of " liberty, and in such a way that by the grace of God it will " be defended as our fathers have always done. In this dis- " position I leave you, and without any other consideration " than the good of the city: may God give me grace to perform " that which is the duty of every citizen for the benefit of his " country. I humbly recommend myself to your highnesses. " From San Miniato the seventh of December 1479. Your " highnesses' good and obedient son and servant

LORENZO DE' MEDICI " *.

The humble conclusion of this letter in a tone so different from the former is a striking proof of Lorenzo's extreme caution and anxiety to conceal the master's hand under the folds of the civic garment: after despatching it he proceeded to Pisa where he received his full powers as plenipotentiary, and embarking at Leghorn was received at Naples with the highest honours as well as the greatest curiosity by all people from the monarch downwards, for his reputation great in itself, had been carried by the late conspiracy far and wide all over the civilised world. The King of Naples had in fact

* Lettere di Principi, vol. ii., p. 1, Venice Edition, A.D. 1575.

no personal dislike to Lorenzo; his objects were purely political; he wished to extend his sway over Lombardy and Tuscany and Florence was an obstacle: Genoa had fallen completely under his influence and the quarrels of Milan gave him some hold of Lombardy: the Duke of Calabria was endeavouring to establish his power over Siena wherefore he felt more disposed to separate from Pope Sixtus whose objects were different, but who would nevertheless partake of all the good fortune that fell to the house of Naples. Sixtus on the contrary still nourished a deadly hatred towards Lorenzo and the Florentines, both for the injury he had done them and for what he had failed in doing; for the insults he had received; for their bold exposition of his conduct to the world, and their escape from the subjection he had prepared: he therefore would listen to nothing but absolute humiliation; wherefore it became necessary that Florence and Naples should treat separately and Ferdinand calculated that a peace with that city would give him time to establish his influence more surely in Siena while the Florentines would be sufficiently occupied by their own factions therefore less able to resist him when occasion arrived *.

A treacherous attack and the final capture of Sarzana by the Fregosi of Genoa during the truce, alarmed Florence and together with the decapitation of Bernardo Bandini, who had through Lorenzo's influence been delivered up by the sultan, finished the public transactions of the year 1479 †.

Lorenzo remained full three months at Naples attaching all the leading courtiers to him by bribes under the gentler term of gifts, and gradually gaining over A.D. 1480. the cautious and politic Ferdinand by his diplomatic ability and the charms of his personal qualities. He succeeded in convincing that monarch that the general interests of Naples and Florence as independent Italian states were too much alike for either to benefit by war at that moment: he informed

* O. Malavolti, Parte iii., Lib. iv.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 144.

him of a treaty already in progress with Regnier of Lorraine, a claimant of the Neapolitan throne as grandson by the female line of old Regnier Count of Provence who was still living after having survived all his male descendants. This young prince had engaged to bring six thousand horse against the house of Aragon and seconded by Louis XI. (who though old was still active and intriguing) would have been a formidable antagonist. This negotiation was the work of Lorenzo; but both he and Ferdinand were sensible to the danger of allowing Frenchmen to set their foot in Italy instead of opposing the Duke of Milan to all their attempts of entering by the northern provinces, yet Lorenzo, in concert with Venice, had been forced to it for self-defence *. It was their interest also to strengthen Venice against the Turks without leaving her ambitious projects of aggrandisement unwatched; and at the same time to curb the turbulent designs of Sixtus whose nepotism was more than sufficient to convulse as it already had done, the whole Italian peninsula.

All these things were discussed; but Ferdinand's own ambition although as dangerous as either the Pope's or Venetians' was kept out of sight; and the king before he came to any conclusion resolved to try what effect Lorenzo's protracted absence might have on the malcontents of Florence. He therefore spun out these negotiations with the Medici, for whose safety his domestic enemies now began to express much anxiety hinting what they might be supposed to wish, that he would fall like Giacopo Piccinino by Ferdinand's treachery and never return to Florence. But there was no commotion, no sign of revolution, no approach to disloyalty; and therefore Ferdinand consented to sign a treaty of peace on the sixth of March 1480 under the following conditions. That they should reciprocally defend each other's territories; all captured places to be restored to Florence; the remaining Pazzi still prisoners in

* Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 119.

the dungeon of Volterra were to be released, and the Duke of Calabria to receive a specified annual salary from the Florentines in the character of condottiere *.

The pope and Duke of Milan became parties to the treaty, though the former, as well as Venice, was indignant at the want of consideration shown to him, and withdrew to coalesce with that republic at the end of April: these things alarmed Lorenzo who in consequence resolved to concentrate and fix his own authority more firmly in Florence: his power and popularity were already much augmented by this imposing stroke of political sagacity, not only at home but throughout Italy: its secret history was not thoroughly known, wherefore, wise and bold and successful as it proved, the danger and self-devotion were exaggerated; nor could his enemies underrate it because they had most loudly proclaimed their apprehensions for his safety. The circumstances as already remarked were somewhat different from those in which Piccinino's death occurred; yet there was something finely romantic and magnanimous in this appearance of self-devotion to his country; in unhesitatingly placing himself in the hands of a treacherous, crafty, and unscrupulous monarch who had just been conspiring against his life by open force and secret assassination.

The discontent of Sixtus and Venice at first created great apprehension in Florence; but the peace continued and many internal changes, all destructive of liberty, were begun and accomplished. "On the twelfth of April 1480," says Giovanni Cambi (who from this period becomes the historian of his own times) "the citizens then governing led by Lorenzo; who was so great that he might well be called the tyrant of Florence; held the election purse of the priors in their hands or as it was called '*a mano*.' They appointed the Accoppiatori, and these again selected any one they pleased for the Seignory." The gonfalonier was always nominated from amongst the ruling faction and the rest

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 145.

of the Seignory obeyed him; for in the cabinet councils, as they may be called, the gonfalonier alone represented all the priors, their presence being considerately dispensed with. The governing party also nominated the "Otto di Balià" with the concurrence of the colleges and council of a hundred but put only a certain number of select names to the vote whose election was secure, because all those eligible to be or who had sat as gonfaloniers of justice, belonged by right to the council of a hundred and formed a solid party. Whenever the five Accoppiatori had to nominate a Seignory two candidates were simultaneously proposed for the gonfaloniership while those for the priorate were unrestricted in number, and this always secured two and perhaps more votes in the council of a hundred. To strengthen himself still further Lorenzo was in a state of constant machination, and just at this moment with the consent of his party created a board of thirty citizens who along with the Seignory and Colleges were empowered to compose a Balià of two hundred and ten citizens with the whole authority of the republic for three months, and to establish a fresh scrutiny in the following November.

After having moulded this formidable council to their will Lorenzo's party caused it to issue written orders for the disbursement of a large amount of public money to save his credit at Bruges and other places as already mentioned, and thus says Giovanni Cambi, "the poor community paid for every thing; because the ambitious members of the Balià enticed by the expectation of becoming scrutineers in the forthcoming scrutiny, (an office of great power and privilege) carried all that was proposed to them. This was too powerful an instrument to abandon soon or lightly, and the scrutiny appears to have been postponed by successive adjournments for four years: thus was the community undermined and corrupted day by day, the citizens gradually abased, and a whole people reduced to servile obedience by the mere force of their own ambitious and

selfish craving, if the name of ambition that ennobling when unabused passion, may be applied to sordid aspirations undignified by worth honesty or independence of character.

When this powerful machinery was duly arranged and set in motion according to the will of Lorenzo, his party began disputing with each other for the right of entrance into the council of thirty, so that to restore tranquillity forty more were chosen by the two hundred and ten from amongst themselves and added to that body the whole being appointed for life, half of them governing for the first six months, and the rest for the remainder of the year. This was a great change; no less than the absolute creation of a senate in which every public measure was to originate and pass before it went down to the council of the people, to the municipal council, or to that of the community; and finally to the new council of a hundred. And in order to hold the citizens well in hand by means of their cupidity and ambition, a decree passed which rendered all future gonfaloniers of justice who were not already members of the seventy, eligible to that dignity in right of their office by a vote of this prepotent body; and this expressly to insure the subserviency of those magistrates *.

In this council which was to supersede the odious name of Balià the absolute power of the whole commonwealth was concentrated, and through it in Lorenzo; nor were there wanting many who from the first had asserted what was now proved, that he did not peril life and liberty for the public good, but merely by that bold and somewhat hazardous stroke of policy to recover his declining credit and strengthen his personal influence over the Florentines. This they declared would ere long be made manifest when he would be seen stealthily drawing to himself the mass of public business together with all the authority of the laws until without opposition he

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 145.—Gio. Cambi, Istor. Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani, vol. xxi., p. 1-3.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 25.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 12.—Ar. Stor. Ital., Documento i°, and note, vol. i.

finally made himself master of everything. Another confirmation of this was the reduction of the provisional board of the Decemvirate of war to a permanent council called the "*Otto di Pratica*" or privy council with the same duties but more regulated and restricted authority, which emanating from the same source brought this powerful magistracy; hitherto independent; entirely under the all-absorbing control of Lorenzo *.

While these events were passing in Florence and others in Romagna by which Sixtus got possession of Forlì for Count Girolamo Riario, Alphonso duke of Calabria was busily urging forward his father's and grandfather's policy to get possession of Siena, and finally succeeded in establishing that influence which had been one great object of Neapolitan ambition since king Alphonso's invasion in 1446. The restoration of the "*Fuorusciti*" or banished citizens, and the exile of all those who opposed him, together with the creation of the "*Monte*" or party of the "*Aggregati*," which aggregated all parties not adverse to Neapolitan ascendancy, gave Alphonso so preponderating a power in that city that not only the Senese republicans but even Florence began to tremble for the safety and independence of Tuscany †. Lorenzo in his eagerness for peace had overlooked or more probably had been compelled to shut his eyes on the ambitious projects of Ferdinand, which the continuance of war would rather have favoured than arrested, and the abasement of Florence most surely have been consummated; and hence he has been perhaps unjustly blamed for concluding a treaty on the basis of his personal interests that opened so direct a road to the subjugation of his country. But it was *not* Lorenzo's private interest to have Florence lose her independence or be subjugated by anybody but himself: he had the choice of a ruinous and disastrous war that threatened the very existence,

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 145.
† Malavolti, Lib. v., Parte iii^{a}, fol. 78.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

of his country as an independent nation along with his own certain ruin; or else allow the victor to dictate a peace that at least staved off the present danger, gained time for Florence and therefore gave a greater chance of ultimate safety; for the question was not between a good or a bad peace, but between peace and war, and perhaps final subjugation. The increasing power of Alphonso in Siena no doubt assumed a formidable attitude, and in consequence of the pope's enmity and close alliance with Venice together with the unsettled state of Milan, there seemed to be no remedy, no hinderance to the Duke of Calabria's soon becoming lord of Siena, and ultimately of Florence; for at no other period according to Macchiavelli was she ever in such danger; when the sudden capture of Otranto by Mahomet II. most opportunely saved her*.

A Turkish armament under the command of the grand-vizier Achmet Giedick consisting of one hundred vessels full of troops suddenly disembarked on the coast of Otranto on the twenty-eighth of July 1480; and after a vigorous defence by the garrison took that city on the eleventh of August by storm with the slaughter of twelve thousand inhabitants and great subsequent cruelty. This invasion was attributed to the Venetians' hatred of Ferdinand, and Pope Sixtus was supposed to be cognizant of it; both were to join in bringing over Regnier of Lorrain as generalissimo of their forces, and if possible to ruin Ferdinand. But Sixtus was probably no party to the Turkish invasion, for it struck him with deep fear; more especially as there then existed a strong disposition amongst many Italians to join the infidels for the purpose of breaking down both political tyranny and priestcraft. This event compelled Alphonso to withdraw all his forces from Tuscany, which he said an evil fortune had snatched from his grasp; and also disposed the pontiff to a reconciliation with Florence: to effect this they were advised

* Bruto, Lib. vii., p. 357.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 132.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Orl. Malavolti, Lib. v., Parte iii^a, fol. 78.—Camillo Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni di Napoli, Lib. i°, p. 5.

by Ferdinand to humble themselves before the latter and an embassy of twelve leading citizens was appointed accordingly: these repaired to Rome, entered that city by night unaccompanied by noise or show, presented themselves next day at the portico of Saint Peter where Sixtus on his throne, surrounded by a numerous assembly of prelates and cardinals was expecting them: all the twelve immediately threw themselves at his feet and humbly demanded pardon for the crimes of their country, while they expressed their readiness to submit to any punishment that his holiness might please to inflict. The pontiff touched each lightly on the shoulder with a wand, and after causing to be read some sacred forms of absolution usual in such cases, absolved them altogether from past errors, and readmitted them to the bosom of the church and her divine offices. They were then allowed to be accompanied home by the prelates, courtiers, and the cardinals' attendants; not as schismatics and disobedient children, but as good Christians; and thus every contention finished with the termination of the year 1480; yet it was not until Guidantonio Vespucci returned from a mission to France that the Florentines were enabled by his diplomatic talents to procure absolution from the heavy penance of maintaining fifteen galleys against the Turks while they kept their footing in Italy*.

The king of Naples also in addition to the late treaty with Florence made a new league with that republic to which the Duke of Ferrara, the Marquis of Mantua, the Duke of Milan, and even Louis XI. of France became parties. Thus strengthened, the only remaining cause of inquietude was Agostino Fregoso's continued occupation of Sarzana to which neighbourhood a body of men-at-arms, each then consisting of five soldiers, besides other forces were despatched; but after some blows Alphonso of Calabria who had not as yet left Tuscany promised to arrange the dispute in an amicable way and restore the

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 146.—Bruto, Lib. vii., p. 373.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

town*. The restoration of all the captured Florentine places by the Duke of Calabria, which was partially carried into effect early in the following spring, raised the indignation of Siena and diminished his influence while the fame of Lorenzo was proportionately augmented by this favourable turn in national affairs: he was now exalted to the skies for skilfully regaining by friendly negotiation what had been lost in unsuccessful war, and overcoming the powerful and crafty sovereign of Naples by the mere force of superior talent. All his great ability would however have availed but little with Ferdinand if the Turkish invasion had not suddenly arrested every hope of Tuscan conquest and enabled him to grant as a favour what he was in reality unable to retain †.

Nevertheless Lorenzo received the praise, as he would equally have borne the blame of these events had they turned out less fortunate, and perhaps without meriting one more than the other; so much more do people look to results than an inquiry into the means that produced them.

Thus ended the troubles consequent upon the Pazzi conspiracy; out of which, after seeing himself reduced to the most perilous condition both personally and politically; Lorenzo de' Medici rose like a giant refreshed with wine; in augmented strength, with more penetrating influence, and almost absolute sway over Florence.

CONTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—England: Edward IV.—Scotland: James III. —France: Louis XI.—Castile and Aragon: Ferdinand and Isabella from 1479.—Portugal: Alphonso V.—Burgundy: Maria and Maximilian.—German Emperor: Frederic III.—Naples: Ferdinand.—Sicily: a Province of Aragon.—Pope: Sixtus IV.—Ottoman Empire: Mahomet II.

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* Ammirato, Lib. xxiv., p. 146. † Bruto, Lib. vii., p. 375.

CHAPTER V.

FROM A.D. 1480 TO A.D. 1492.

WHEN we compare the tranquillity of Florence under the elder Medici with its previous turbulence, in our ignorance of the real condition of the popular mass of these two periods we are tempted to consider the ascendancy of that family as a relief if not a blessing to the people: for whatever may have been the loss of real liberty, the public peculation, the interested and useless wars, or the excessive taxation under Medician rule; all these evils existed more or less directly, or in other forms, during some of the best periods of the Florentine republic. It is true that they gradually became sharper and more concentrated under Cosimo, Piero, and Lorenzo; more easily inflicted; and more invariably directed into exclusive channels; but the forms of liberty, and even some of its most beneficial consequences, as far as they had ever existed in the commonwealth; the apparent equality of the citizens; the freedom of human energy in its ever-varying aspect; all these were apparently left untouched by any positive enactments; and the confinement of political power and patronage to an ascendant faction absolutely ruled by the Medici, was the only real, though most important, restriction, beyond what had ever been common in the state. Even this was more notable from its stability than any real difference of character; for as Florence had been ever governed by faction the same exclusiveness had always existed, only with greater mutability as it shifted from party to party

A.D. 1481.

according to the direction of the storm. But this very mutability circulated an energetic though turbulent spirit in the community, a spirit in constant struggles against individual supremacy, until it was undermined by the Albizzi and ultimately mastered by the Medician chiefs; it was this canker that formed the great evil of their government though its demoralising influence was not in the first instance apparent.

Lorenzo de' Medici began the year 1481 with greater power and better prospects than at any former period: his reputation was high, his success acknowledged, his popularity undiminished; yet without being now able to detect motives, or discover how far private enmity and how far general discontent may have operated we perceive strong symptoms of dissatisfaction breaking out from time to time, the causes of which are slurred over or entirely unnoticed by historians*. Giovanni Cambi a cotemporary writer and a decided enemy to Medician power walks over nearly five years in silence; perhaps fearful of writing his real sentiments; and Lionardo Morelli confines himself during the same period to a dry and meagre record of a few insulated and generally unimportant facts without any passing remark. Ammirato, commonly so diffuse, who wrote for and under the Medici was not a cotemporary and is ever cautious in his strictures on that family: Macchiavelli, then a boy, enters but little into the civil history of Florence after this period, but hastily threading a labyrinth of small Italian wars jumps to its conclusion in 1492. He also wrote for a Medici. Bruto, always a doubtful authority *against* that race, is during most of this period a mere paraphrast of Macchiavelli; Jacopo Nardi and Jacopo Pitti are the only two Florentines that give a clear and decided opinion on Lorenzo's internal government, and by both of these historians we are impressed with the belief that he was as unscrupulous in the exercise of his political influence as he was cautious in

* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

exhibiting any appearance of personal superiority over his fellow-citizens. Seizing with a bold and skilful hand on the substance of power he turned its glitter on the magistrates and veiled his supreme and sovereign authority under the quiet garb of a simple citizen. He had so remodelled and modified the ancient constitution that little was now to be apprehended from popular feeling except the choice (in times of great suffering and dissatisfaction) of a chief magistrate who apparently a devoted adherent should really be inimical although chosen with his own consent. For in contradiction to all appearances and precautions men suddenly and frequently change, no one knows why, and are sometimes hard to unravel and guard against; as will soon be apparent in the account of a new attempt on Lorenzo's life which began the present year.

To prevent the possibility of such an occurrence as we have above alluded to, he is said to have conceived a very simple and effective plan which would have made him the acknowledged and legitimate prince of the republic under all the ancient forms of democracy; a plan subsequently executed by the free choice of the citizens although not in the person of a Medici. It has been before observed that Lorenzo had already reduced the Priors of Liberty to a mere cabinet council dependent on the gonfalonier of justice, and that this magistrate in fact was invested with the whole power of the Seignory: his present plan was to create a gonfalonier for life and have himself elected to that office. This however could only be prepared for because according to the ancient regulations of the state, which as it would seem he had not in this instance attempted to annul, no citizen was eligible to the gonfaloniership under five-and-forty years of age; but when that period did arrive it was his intention to appoint a new and concentrated Balià for the reformation of the state and by means of this convenient instrument create a gonfalonier of justice for life to which none but himself could well have been

elected and thus remove all future fears and difficulties. This with a long life would probably have established the sovereignty in Lorenzo's family but he died the year before he would have become eligible; and it is a curious circumstance that the same man who had despotically ruled the Florentine republic for three-and-twenty years, should never have been old enough to hold the chief magistracy of his native country, although for a great part of that time he also governed the political fabric of Italy and even spread his influence amongst the great transalpine nations *!

In the interim Lorenzo continued to make a private use of the pecuniary resources of Florence without any opposition and so effectually that he remedied the disorder of his family affairs which until the time of Piero was excessive, and had since increased by the effects of his own magnificence and the negligence or dishonesty of foreign agents. Taking advantage of his position Lorenzo was in the habit of drawing upon the public purse by what Nardi sarcastically denominates the following "*honest means*." He borrowed through his agents, say 1000 florins from one of the four great treasurers of the republic, and whether from fear or affection no man dared any longer refuse him, and when this treasurer's period of office was on the point of expiring Lorenzo ordered his successor nominally to make good the deficiency by charging himself with the amount of money thus taken; additional sums were then borrowed from him, and thus a succession of loans was made on the treasury, the fraudulent books being handed regularly over to each new official servant in the four revenue departments; namely, the "*Mount*," or public funds; the "*Salt Office*," the "*Customs*," and the "*Contract Office*," all of whom served him without difficulty on the certainty of future reimbursement. Whether any of the money so peculated were ever repaid is not recorded because the secret

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 25.

ledger of the perpetual "*Proveditore*" could never be found amongst the papers of the Mount during the state revolution of the year 1494, and it was believed to have been purposely hidden or destroyed by the principal actors on that occasion. But in other books of the same office were found the names of many private pensioners of the Medician faction who were paid from the public purse besides foreign chiefs of party principally of Romagna; neither was there wanting in those days, especially after the troubles of 1478, many mercantile men who were eager for Lorenzo's name and countenance in order that he might seem a partner in their business, and for this favour he shared their profits. Other citizens in the exercise of offices conferred on them by the Medici made great fortunes by public supplies and contracts connected in various ways with the army, and thus he attached himself by a thousand ties to almost every citizen of consequence in Florence*.

These proceedings were sure to raise up personal enemies, wherefore the first six months of 1481 had not yet passed when a new plot against the life of Lorenzo was discovered and the actors executed. Battista Frescobaldi, Filippo Baldinucci and a natural son of Guido Baldovinetti had settled to assassinate him in the church of the Carmine, Francesco the brother of Filippo Baldinucci being also implicated. Frescobaldi was apparently an adherent of the Medici; he held the high office of Florentine consul at Constantinople when Bernardo Bandini was arrested for the murder of Giuliano, and as he became actively employed in that negotiation it was a subject of some astonishment why he should so soon have involved himself in a more dangerous and less promising enterprise. Nor are the motives of his coadjutors more patent although Girolamo Riario has been named as their instigator: Francesco Baldinucci is said to have spoken strongly against the deed, but he was hanged with

* Jacopo Nardi, Stor. Fiorent., Lib. i°, p. 13, Ed^a. Firenza, 1584.

the rest for keeping the secret too well, and the whole conspiracy failed because certain armour ordered to be made for the occasion was not completed in time! On such cobwebs rests the destiny of nations*! The death of Mahomet II. enabled Ferdinand when he least expected it to recapture Otranto which surrendered on the tenth or twelfth of September, to the great relief of all the Italian powers who had unwillingly suspended their dissensions while under the dread of so powerful an enemy. Fifteen hundred Turks entered the service of Naples and showed themselves as faithful in extremity as the Saracens of former days had proved to Manfred; the rest rejoined their countrymen after some breach of faith on the part of Alphonso Duke of Calabria who commanded at the siege. As there was a general league against the infidels between Mathew Corvinus King of Hungary and all the Italian powers except Venice who would take no part; as well as with the monarchs of Aragon and Portugal, and as the two Ottoman brothers were struggling for the throne of Mahomet, the Christian soldiers shouted to be led against Constantinople; but dissensions broke forth which along with Count Riario's intrigues for self-aggrandisement in the following year defeated every attempt of the pontiff, and the whole combined armament fell to pieces†.

Tranquillity was thus restored for a moment and only for a moment: after Bona Duchess of Milan had by means of Prospero Adorno and a strong force under Robert of San Severino, regained the lordship of Genoa in 1477, the quarrels of the reigning family of Milan assisted by Ferdinand engendered fresh troubles in the former city which revolted under the same Prospero in 1478. The whole population exasperated by the licentiousness of Milanese garrisons threw themselves on Ferdinand, who eager at that moment to humble both Milan and

* Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 148.—Pignotti, Lib. iv., cap. xv., p. 233.
† Muratori, Annali.

Florence most cheerfully met their wishes. The revolution being completed Robert of San Severino, then an exile at Asti, was made general of the Genoese, and the popular faction under Prospero Adorno and Lodovico Fregoso triumphed over the nobles who were driven in great numbers from the city. A Milanese army was soon after defeated without the walls while fresh troubles raged within. The nobles returned; and Battista Fregoso carrying in his hand the promise of Bona to restore the fortresses which she still held and with them the independence of Genoa, was declared Doge of that republic and with restored freedom became an ally instead of an enemy of Milan *. After this revolution San Severino who with Prospero Adorno was still powerful in the Genoese territory joined Sforza Duke of Bari and Lodovico the Moor: the former died suddenly, not without suspicion of poison from his brother who succeeded to that title, and along with San Severino marched from Tuscany in August 1479 and got possession of Tortona. He soon managed to attach the governor of Milan Castle to his party, was admitted into that fortress, effected a forced reconciliation with Bona which the old and favourite minister Cecco Simonetta foretold would be his own death and her ruin and she soon felt its truth: Simonetta was imprisoned, tortured, and executed in October 1479, at Pavia, and Lodovico became sole governor of Milan and keeper of his nephew's person. After removing all Bona's ministers he declared Gian-Galeazzo Maria to be arrived at his majority and invested him with the ensigns of government on the seventh of October 1480, although only twelve years of age. The duchess retired from Milan in disgust, and San Severino who had been general of the forces and one of Lodovico's counsellors quarrelled with him early in 1481. An affray took place in February between their followers, other causes of distrust and quarrel supervened, and San Severino also retired from the capital. King Ferdinand

* Interiano, Storia di Genoa, Lib. viii., fol. 216.

and the Florentines attempted to reconcile them but in vain and Costanzo Sforza lord of Pesaro was sent by the latter to succeed him*.

Venice, ever eager for self-aggrandisement at any price, longed for Ferrara and with one of those flimsy pretexts for a quarrel which are always at hand, threatened the ruin of the house of Este. Ferdinand, Lodovico and the Florentines all united in trying to interest the pontiff in this Duke's defence; but they spoke to a wolf in the lamb's behalf, for Sixtus swayed by the interested counsel of Riario who in concert with Venice wanted to add part of the Ferrarese territory to Imola and Forlì, not only refused to defend his vassal's cause, but in the month of August, even before the recapture of Otranto, secretly joined the Venetians against him; and as part of the dominions of Este was an imperial, and part an ecclesiastical fief, it was agreed that they should be thus partitioned between the republic of Venice and the sovereign pontiff.

Italy therefore was now divided into two great parties by existing alliances; for all felt that war was inevitable; the pope and Venice with the Genoese, Senese, and several minor powers on one side; Naples, Florence, Milan, Bologna and some petty states and princes on the other. The Florentines with these prospects renewed the "*Otto di Pratica*" instead of appointing a decemvirate of war which was now reserved for more pressing emergencies, and in this feverish state of affairs terminated the year 1481†.

Hercules of Este, after having tried in vain both to appease the Venetians and engage his liege lord the sovereign pontiff to protect him, prepared for a war which was proclaimed by the doge Giovanni Moncenigo in the name of the Venetian republic on the third of May 1482; and simul- A.D. 1482.

* Muratori, Annali, Anni 1479-81.
† Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 148.—Muratori, Annali.

taneously by Sixtus IV. and Girolamo Riario lord of Forlì and Imola who was to divide the spoil with Venice by a previously arranged convention. War thus burst forth like the explosion of a bomb-shell and its fiery fragments flew to all parts of Italy: the Colonna broke from their fastnesses and carried fire and sword throughout the adjacent lands; the Savelli soon joined their desolating course; the Orsini with hereditary hate opposed their fury, holding hard by the church; and the streets of Rome were often red with the blood of the combatants. The Duke of Calabria marched without delay to the relief of his brother-in-law, but was met by the papal forces and another dismal arena of sorrow and desolation was established within forty miles of Rome. Not far on the other side Florence had reëstablished Nicholas Vitelli by force of arms in the lordship of Città di Castello by driving out Lorenzo Giustini the papal governor who ravaged all the adjacent country in revenge. In Romagna Giovanni Bentivoglio was warring with the usual devastations against Girolamo Riario the original author of the war: Ibletto Fieschi from the Ligurian Alps harassed the Milanese frontier: the octogenarian Piero Maria de' Rossi of Parma carried all the horrors of partisan warfare into the same territory, in despite of age, and when he died in the following autumn his son Guido proved himself no less zealous in a cause which was made more palatable to both by an annual pension from the Venetians expressly to vex and annoy the Duke of Milan *.

"The minutely written journals of this war," says Sismondi, "exhibit all the anarchy that reigned in those countries governed in the Duke of Milan's name, the continual plundering to which they were exposed and the impossibility of obtaining justice. All these details escape the general historian because there is not a single great touch of virtue or generosity of sentiment to awaken an interest for these small towns after

* Sismondi, vol. viii., cap. lxxxviii.—Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. i°, p. 20.

having once lost their liberty; but we are convinced by the tedious perusal of such records, that the silence of historians on the destiny of enslaved communities is no indication of either their happiness or security. The people of Parma at this epoch suffered all the vexations of the most factious republic without the relief of a single instance of noble or elevated sentiment; without having a will that could be called their own; and finally, without deserving that the historian in seeing their sufferings should stop to record them "*.

The principal seat of war was on the frontiers of Ferrara including most of the country between that city, Venice, and Ravenna; a district intersected in all directions by numberless canals, ditches, rivers, lakes and swamps; the last too shallow for boats and too deep for any military operation. This description of country, formed by the alluvial depositions of many great rivers descending from the Alps and Apennines, obtains more or less between Bologna and Ferrara, near Rovigo, around Mesola, Adria, Comacchio, and all that portion of the great Lombard Delta; and the islands, as they may be called, that are formed by the union of the Po, the Adige, the Tartaro and other streams comprising most of the plains between Venice, Padua, Mantua and Verona with part of the present legation of Ferrara, are called the "*Polesine*," the chief and most fertile of them being that of Rovigo. The conquest of all the numerous towns and burghs securely seated amidst these watery meshes was an enterprise of no small difficulty but what Venice looked confidently to achieve.

We have already said that Robert of San Severino had retired in disgust from Milan in consequence of a quarrel with Lodovico, which probably arose from the different estimate placed on his services by himself and that prince; but from whatever cause, San Severino and his seven sons, all able to bear arms, were proclaimed rebels in January 1482. On this,

* Sismondi, Rep. Ital., vol. viii, cap. lxxxviii., p. 145-7.

at the head of eighty horsemen and a strong body of infantry he broke from Tortona, cut his way through a small Milanese force that besieged him, gained the Genoese mountains, and thence hastened to Venice where he offered his services against Lodovico. The aid of such a commander was eagerly accepted, and he soon mastered the towns of Mellario, Trecento, Brigantino and Adria; Comaccio then fell, besides some redoubts on the Po at Pelosella. The Duke of Urbino who was opposed to him on the part of the League could accomplish little against the younger, more vigorous, and probably superior genius of his enemy; it was necessarily a war of detachments, and perhaps depended much on the skill and promptitude with which either party threw bridges over the numerous rivers and canals that barred their progress. There were no great encounters, but a frightful mortality of all ranks and descriptions in both armies, from the fevers of those pestilent marshes which between soldiers and labourers are said to have destroyed twenty thousand men.

The Duke of Ferrara himself fell sick in the moment of greatest need, but his wife Leonora of Aragon supplied his place with masculine courage and feminine enthusiasm: she called the ardour of religion to her aid, sent for a hermit from Bologna who by his preaching encouraged the people to fight as in a holy war. Teeming with enthusiasm and exciting the attentive crowds he began at length to fancy himself a prophet and promised to raise up a squadron of twelve galleys to defeat the enemy then besieging Figheruolo. After some absurd ceremonies he arrived at the Duke of Urbino's camp whence he was dismissed somewhat crest-fallen by that general, who told him that the Venetians not being possessed by the devil required no exorcising, but that he might inform the duchess it was artillery, men, and money; not prayers that were needed to overcome the enemy: these not being forthcoming, Figheruolo, Lendenara, La Badià, and finally Rovigo; the

capital of the "*Polesine*" and ancient patrimony of the house of Este; successively capitulated *.

The allies meanwhile determined to hamper Sixtus at home and so leave the campaign in Lombardy entirely on Venetian resources: Alphonso therefore made incursions to the gates of Rome and was first opposed by Riario, gonfalonier of the church, but the aspect of affairs soon altered when at the pontiff's request Roberto Malatesta of Rimini with a reënforcement of two thousand four hundred men took charge of the papal army. He almost forced Alphonso to battle at Campo Morto near Villetri, and giving the command of his right wing to Giovanni Giacomo Piccinino whose father had been murdered by Ferdinand felt secure of his efforts, which indeed materially contributed to the victory: the battle was bloody and obstinate beyond what was then usual; more than a thousand men remained dead on the field; the Neapolitans were totally routed, and Alphonso was saved only by the fidelity of his Turkish soldiers. Three hundred and sixty gentlemen and a great mass of inferior note were made prisoners; amongst them several companies of Turks who strange to say were instantly taken into the pontiff's service and employed as a military police without any attempt to convert them. Malatesta died at Rome from a fever occasioned by imprudently drinking cold water as was reported: but in his family records and the public belief, by poison from the hand of Girolamo Riario †.

As Roberto left no legitimate issue, Girolamo who had long coveted now endeavoured to seize his dominions, but was kept in check and finally prevented by the Florentines. Malatesta had recommended his infant son to the protection of Frederic Duke of Urbino who commanded for the enemy; and this prince dying the same day at Bologna, had also recommended his own son and family in general, to the care of his daughter's

* Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 148-51.—Muratori, Annali.

† Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. i°, p. 22.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Sismondi, vol. viii, p. 151.—Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 151.

husband Malatesta, while she hearing the news of both events at the same time was compelled to ask and receive protection at the hand of her husband's adversaries against the very person in whose service he had died, and whose states he had just saved from destruction!

The rapid progress of Venice in Lombardy; the influence of the imperial ambassador, and the threats of a general council; finally opened the pontiff's eyes to his real interests and induced him to conclude a treaty of peace and alliance with Naples Florence and Milan in December 1482, leaving a place for the Venetians which they not only refused to accept but pushed the war on so vigorously that after defeating the Duke of Ferrara in a pitched battle they encamped in the ducal park under the very walls of his capital. The Florentines, who had now changed the "*Otto di Pratica*" into a decemvirate of war, determined in concert with the King of Naples to avail themselves of this peace to succour Ferrara; and Alphonso with a small force passed through Florence on his way to that city in the beginning of January 1483 *.

A.D. 1483. The impetuous Sixtus having once decided, followed up his resolution with vigour by summoning Venice to accede to the pacification of Italy and instantly evacuate the Ferrarese territory which was now declared to be under ecclesiastical protection; but she paid little attention either to this command or a subsequent excommunication, and exerted herself more strenuously to carry her object against all the efforts of the "*Most holy League;*" an appellation which the pope's recent accession had bestowed upon it. A congress of the allied powers had met at Cremona where Lorenzo de' Medici represented Florence; but while they debated, the Venetians had captured Gallipoli, Nardò, and other parts of the Terra di Otranto besides several places within a mile of Ferrara. Florence and Bologna were hastily preparing succours when

* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 154, et seq.

Alphonso unable to bear the Venetian audacity attacked and defeated them near Argenta, took the Proveditore prisoner, and checked their alarming progress. Startled by so vigorous a resistance from a beaten enemy, and seeing the great force of the league, Venice took the Duke of Lorraine into her service, urged on the Genoese to more exertion, encouraged the Rossi of Parma, and assisted the Senese exiles; the first to alarm Ferdinand; the second Florence; the third to be a thorn in the side of Milan, and the fourth to keep both the pope and Florentines in anxiety. On the other hand Florence seeing events thicken, renewed the decemvirate of war by a vote of the seventy and then despatched Guidantonio Vespucci to Sixtus, and Piero Nasi to Ferdinand, to unite the league more closely by impressing on the pontiff's mind that the fall of Ferrara would be the ruin of Italy.

A new league was accordingly made by which Niccolo Vitelli was abandoned as subordinates always are when it suits the interest of principals; and Città di Castello restored to the church; Vitelli however defied both and defended his possessions; but this gave little inquietude to Florence who made a second league with Siena that secured a complete restitution of the captured places to which there had been some lingering opposition, and thus Florence recovered her former integrity except the possession of Sarzana which Agostino Fregoso still continued to hold and occasioned much trouble and anxiety to the republic *.

The pope meanwhile without any alteration of circumstances, except his own secession, since the time he was an ally of Venice, launched forth a terrible anathema against that republic, which was calmly answered by appealing to a general council; pending which all religious offices were ordered to be performed as usual. In the interim Lodovico gained some ground in Lombardy and the Duke of Calabria finally carried war into

* Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 156.

the Venetian territory, while Hercules of Este routed the Duke of Lorraine at a place called La Stellata*. At this time Louis XI. of France interfered as a peacemaker; but one of his ambassadors died at Florence, and the rest could do nothing in consequence of the death of Louis himself and the accession of Charles VIII. a prince of no talent, but who with great personal courage and an empty pompous ambition wrought greater changes in Italy than any other monarch of the age. The loss of Sarzana still troubled Florence who was vigorously
A.D. 1484. preparing to reduce it when negotiations commenced which promised a speedy settlement; but in the midst of them intelligence arrived that it had been sold to the Bank of Saint George, and a garrison from that powerful company soon occupied the place, which with that of Pietra Santa and a strong squadron of galleys gave considerable annoyance to the Florentines.

Most of the belligerents began now to tire of war, and the death of Frederic Marquis of Mantua who had hitherto kept Lodovico and Alphonso from quarrelling accelerated its conclusion: Lodovico began the negotiation on his own account, for he was short of funds and moreover feared the efforts of Alphonso to place the government of Milan in the hands of the young duke who had married his daughter. The other allied powers joined in this treaty, and the Duke of Ferrara as the weakest and most injured suffered accordingly: he was deprived of Rovigo and the Polesine, in exchange for which Gallipoli and Nardò were restored to Naples; but he recovered a few small towns, and all that the Venetians had lost they as usual most dexterously re-acquired even to the very rights that formed the ostensible excuse for war †. The allies although angry at this peace were compelled to accept it from exhaustion,

* Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 158.

† Ammirato, generally so accurate, says that Rovigo and the Polesine were restored to Ferrara; but Muratori denies this, by an appeal to the treaty itself, as given in Du Mont. Corp. Diplomat.

and it was concluded at Bagnolo on the seventh of August 1484. On the twelfth it was brought to the pope who indignantly refused his benediction, and in this excited state he died on the night of the thirteenth *.

The Florentines who gained nothing by the war but an increase of debt, were well satisfied at its termination, not only for the relief it afforded, but also because it enabled them to direct all their efforts on Sarzana, the loss of which was sensibly felt but more especially by Lorenzo as a slur on his administration which thus diminished instead of augmented the public domains. One of their first steps was to despatch an embassy of congratulation to Giovanbattista Cibo Cardinal of Saint Cecilia, a Genoese, who succeeded Sixtus IV. on the twenty-ninth of August 1484, under the name of Innocent VIII. which he was supposed to have assumed as an indication and gage of his pacific intentions †. The treaty of Bagnolo left all Italy in peace except Rome and Florence; the first was disturbed by civil wars the last by that of Sarzana.

We have already said that this important place was now the property of the celebrated bank of Saint George a far more formidable enemy than the Fregosi. This bank arose out of a debt incurred by Genoa in one of her obstinate conflicts with Venice: at the conclusion of the war those citizens who had advanced money to government were put in possession of the port duties, and the palace over the custom-house was given to them as an office. They immediately formed themselves into a deliberative council of one hundred members, and a court of directors of eight: the whole debt was then divided into shares called "*Luoghi*" or places, and the new corporation was denominated the Bank of Saint George. Genoese wars were frequent; money was continually wanted; it became easier to borrow than

* Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. i°, p. 24.—Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 162.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 162.

impose new taxes; the bank was always ready to lend; so that debt augmented until almost every town of consequence fell to this powerful company which ruled them absolutely and independently as a sovereign state.

As the bank was wisely directed and its rule impartial and light, there was an eagerness to be placed under its dominion; for whatever political changes occurred either from foreign war or domestic factions the company studiously kept aloof until all was over, and then stepped forward in augmented strength to insist on a confirmation of their privileges. This could hardly be refused without danger, for the factions were generally exhausted and the bank strong in troops, in money, and in justice. Thus says Macchiavelli, in the same circle, amongst the same citizens and at one and the same time, were to be seen liberty and tyranny, "simple manners and corrupt; justice and licentiousness;" in a word, good and bad government; for that company even in Macchiavelli's time kept Genoa "full of ancient and venerable customs"*.

This then was the body to whom Fregoso sold Sarzana and they resolved to defend it: they already occupied Pietra Santa about half way on the high road to Pisa, and the Florentines aware that the possession of this place was not only necessary to the capture of Sarzana as commanding their line of communications, but also essential to the preservation of the latter when reduced; cut off as it was from their territory and bordering on that of Genoa. The capture of Pietra Santa had been before recommended but Florence having no quarrel with the Bank of Saint George at that epoch would not listen to this advice: now the case was altered, for that company had not only bought her property but had shown a hostile disposition towards her subjects; yet according to Macchiavelli a trick was resorted to in order to give a better colour to the proceeding. A valuable convoy with a slender escort was despatched

* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—The resemblance of this bank to our E. I. Company is striking.

to the Florentine camp before Sarzana which having to pass under Pietra Santa an attack on it was expected, and so it happened; the temptation was too powerful and the convoy was taken. Upon this the army raised the siege of Sarzana, marched direct on Pietra Santa and after a long and sickly campaign in which Lorenzo de' Medici's presence coupled with the bravery and kindness of Antonio Pucci, kept up a good military spirit, Pietra Santa surrendered on the eighth of November 1484. But during this time a naval war and a fruitless attempt on Leghorn by the Genoese tried the expenses and anxiety of Florence, and the reduction of Sarzana became still a work of time*.

The Florentines hoped much from Pope Innocent's peaceable disposition, and influence at Genoa to restore tranquillity with the possession of Sarzana; but a long time past in fruitless negotiations, and the whole of 1485 wore away without any active operations of consequence against it. This was occasioned partly by Lorenzo's bad state of health from hereditary gout and the commencement of that stomach complaint which afterwards killed him. His illness obliged him to use the baths of Roselle and being therefore compelled to remain for a considerable time far distant from Florence he was unwilling to engage in any affair of great moment. A war, which about the same period broke out between Innocent and Ferdinand, proved also another obstacle to the active prosecution of that between Florence and Genoa seeing that it involved the former republic in this new and vexatious quarrel. A.D. 1485.

The pope although a Neapolitan prelate and indebted to Ferdinand for his primitive advancement in the church, was nevertheless a decided enemy to both him and his more ferocious son Alphonso Duke of Calabria; he affected, or really

* Gio. Cambi, p. 24.—Bruto, Lib. viii., p. 433-5.—Ammirato, Lib. xxv., pp. 162-166.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

felt a detestation for their cruelty and rapacity and such hatred was not a little embittered by party spirit, for his father had held a high and distinguished office under the house of Anjou. Besides this the supposed or real attachments of subject and dependent prelates have seldom accompanied them to the throne, where new feelings, new interests, and new passions impatiently await their arrival. Innocent too was the first pontiff who either from sincerity or audacity disdained the flimsy mantle of nepotism and unblushingly acknowledged his illegitimate offspring, making no secret of his intentions to advance their fortune. In this disposition he was not displeased to see a general spirit of rebellion spring up amongst the Neapolitan barons against the rapacious and accumulating extortions of Ferdinand and the more open and unscrupulous ferocity of Alphonso of Calabria; nor were these feelings unknown to the insurgents many of whom lost no time in imploring his protection. The king too had refused to pay tribute to the pope as liege lord of Naples and Sicily, asserting that he was sovereign of Naples only; and the pope in revenge wished to dethrone him and exalt a prince that would not only acknowledge the supremacy of Rome but assist in establishing his favourite son Franceschetto Cibo; who afterwards married Lorenzo's daughter Maddalena de' Medici; in some principality of that kingdom. Innocent was strenuously encouraged in these objects by the cardinal of Saint Piero in Vincula, as much from jealousy of the cardinal of Aragon (a son of Ferdinand) as from a naturally ambitious and warlike character which afterwards showed itself in the celebrated Julius II. and through him it is supposed that the potent Prince of Salerno was induced to take part in the insurrection. The pope finally concluded a league with the insurgent barons engaging them openly to supplicate his protection; which was meant not only as a pledge of their fidelity but also as a testimony for all Christendom that to

defend others, and not on his own private account, this war was undertaken*.

The Duke of Calabria soon became aware of these negotiations and resolved that if other wars had impoverished the state this one should by confiscation enrich it: he therefore determined to meet the barons at Cività di Chieti in the Abruzzi ostensibly to arrange with them an augmentation of the salt-tax and other financial matters, but really to arrest Count Montorio of the Camponischi, Chief of Aquila, and thus secure that city. Aquila is a town of the Abruzzi, situated in the midst of a lofty range of mountains, and which at that epoch was so much augmented in men, arms, and general riches, as only to yield the palm to Naples herself; it was on the confines of the ecclesiastical states and self-governed, although not entirely independent. Amongst the civic families, that of Camponischi had risen to such power and influence that it ruled the community and even rendered a previous application to its chief by the Neapolitan kings absolutely necessary ere they could feel sure of obtaining their local objects: hence it was less oppressed than any other city, and to maintain this high position became the policy as it was the natural bent of that family. They were adherents of the house of Anjou, had assisted both Regnier and John, and to secure their fidelity or rather that of Aquila itself, Piero Camponisco was created Count of Montorio a title which once belonged to his family but had been forfeited in former rebellions. This however made no difference in Camponischi's patriotism who never allowing his native city to be oppressed by taxation like the rest, was accused of ingratitude: nevertheless confiding in his innocence he with a wife and two sons went boldly to meet the Duke of Calabria who instantly sent them all prisoners to Naples. Suspecting the consequences the prince occupied Aquila with some troops, insufficient to coerce the citizens but

* Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. i°, pp. 29-54.

enough to rouse their indignation to its height; wherefore they instantly proffered their allegiance to the pope who as lord paramount had some legal right to see justice done to his vassals, and therefore accepted their offer *.

Troops were immediately marched into the Abruzzi, the barons were called upon to defend their liberty in a general confederacy of which Innocent declared himself the head, and war was everywhere in preparation. Ferdinand endeavoured to calm the rising storm by releasing the Count of Montorio in November; but Innocent relaxed nothing of his activity and while he called the barons to arms the king summoned them to hold a parliament at Naples. Only three attended; the rest feared his treachery and the loss of their own heads; but they nevertheless assembled at the castle of Melfi under pretence of honouring the marriage of Trajan Caracciolo the Duke of Melfi's son: Alphonso however was not deceived and struck the first blow by pouncing upon the Count of Nola's territory reducing his strongholds and sending his wife and two sons prisoners to Naples †.

His intention was to crush rebellion in the bud, but it burst the sooner for this stroke and spread with a strength and violence that startled him; yet as neither party was ready for the trial a succession of hollow negotiations commenced on purpose to gain time for more vigorous action. Ferdinand despatched ambassadors in August to demand from both Milan and Florence those succours which their engagements bound them to supply: Lodovico Sforza long avoided a reply but Florence under Lorenzo's influence at once promised her aid and finally both joined the royal cause. On the second of November these states engaged the Count of Pitigliano with four more of the Orsini, besides the Lord of Piombino and Count Rinuccio di Marciano, to command the confederate

* Giannone, vol. xii., Lib. xxviii., cap. i. —Bruto, Lib. viii., p. 445.—Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. i°, p. 62.

† Giannone, Lib. xxviii., cap. i.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 180.

troops, all under the supremacy of Pitigliano, Count Marsilio Torello being the Duke of Milan's general. The pope relieved Venice from excommunication and endeavoured to excite her to vengeance against Ferdinand; but unwilling to exalt the church and abase the king too much she contented herself with allowing Robert of Sanseverino to enter the papal service with thirty-two squadrons of cavalry and a body of footmen *. Ambassadors were also despatched to offer the crown of Naples to Regnier Duke of Lorraine who was just then quitting the French court in disgust at being refused the inheritance of old Regnier of Anjou his grandfather. He accepted the gift, received some miserable aid from the French regency, for Charles VIII was yet a minor but pampered with high-reaching claims upon the throne of Naples: a squadron of galleys awaited his arrival at Genoa and the warlike cardinal of San Piero in Vincula was already there impatient to receive him on board; but he delayed until too late and the war terminated without him †.

The opposition of many powerful chiefs to one monarch unless with a despotic leader, is rarely successful at any time, and was still less likely to be so at a period when every baron was an independent prince who had his own private objects and petty jealousies in addition to the one great and universal grievance. In such a league union is commonly ephemeral, and the disputes of the Prince of Salerno and the Count of Sarno, the two leading barons; and of the pope with San Severino; soon vitiated and weakened this confederacy. The universal belief that Alphonso of Calabria was resolved to destroy the barons had united and compelled them to revolt; the Anjou party were rejoiced at this from a hope of recovering lost power and property; that of Aragon was in dismay from the fear of losing both: such were the sentiments of the Neapolitan people.

* Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 171.— Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. i°, p. 69.

† Mem. de Philippe de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. i.

amongst whom there was wide and universal disorder: the roads were broken, trade arrested, the tribunals closed, and every place full of terror, hope, and confusion. After a while both parties became alarmed at each other's strength, and the increasing discord between Sarno and Salerno generated intrigue suspicion and apprehension amongst the barons. Ferdinand had expressed a desire to meet his nobility in amicable conference and after some difficulties sent his second son Frederic, a prince of totally opposite character to either father or brother, to hear their demands at Salerno. Ferdinand's offers were far too mild and gentle for his nature; the barons would not trust and scarcely listened to them, but on the contrary offered the crown to Don Frederic himself. Shocked even at the bare idea of the crime they were thus tempting him to commit he replied on the following day in a bold and spirited oration, by indignantly refusing to countenance any such proposal and was instantly made prisoner. Little was done in the field for the rest of the year, but San Severino audaciously threw himself between the Duke of Calabria and the Florentines whom he had gallantly advanced to meet. In this state of things with an army under Ferdinand's grandson to watch the barons at home while his son in concert with Florence and Milan carried war into the ecclesiastical states, the year 1485, terminated *.

By Florence this war was prosecuted more with negotiation and intrigue than by force of arms: the Baglioni were to revolutionize Perugia; Vitelli was dead; but his sons were to make an attempt on Città di Castello; Giovanni de' Gatti was urged if possible to assert his family rights in Viterbo: Assisi, Foligno, Montefalco, Spoleto, Todi, and Orvieto were all expected to follow the example of Perugia. The pope checked them with great difficulty and such a division of force that all his efforts in favour of the barons were

A.D. 1486.

* Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. i°, p. 83.—Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 171.

paralysed *. It was May before any efficient movement of the combined armies of Florence and Milan took place; they were now under the command of the Duke of Calabria, and on the eighth of that month a battle was said to have been fought between him and San Severino at Ponte Lamentana in which after many hours of play the combatants separated with the loss of a few prisoners on the papal side and the retirement of San Severino; not a single man being killed or wounded by either party; yet these bloodless battles did not render war less fearful to the miserable peasantry and poor defenceless people! The allies advanced towards Rome which was thrown into consternation by the Orsini, and Innocent's alarm was augmented by Lorenzo de' Medici who with forged letters made him suspect the fidelity of San Severino himself: peace was now talked of; the sacred college with one exception urged it; Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain whose union gave them vast influence, strenuously endeavoured to promote it and the more so because their possession of Sicily imparted both a right and direct interest in the pacification of Italy especially to stave off the threatening claims of France: other powers also offered their mediation, and a treaty was finally concluded on the eleventh of August 1486, by which Ferdinand engaged to pay the church an annual tribute for his kingdom as before; to acknowledge as her immediate vassals, the city of Aquila with all the rebellious barons who had done homage for their fiefs; and not only to pardon the other barons but dispense with any personal homage at Naples and give sufficient guarantees for their safety †. This unwonted clemency was a mere tiger-like stratagem to gain time and opportunity for a better spring: assured that neither Ferdinand and Isabella, nor the Duke of Milan, nor Lorenzo de' Medici, who were their sureties, would hold him hard to his promise, he ere

* Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 173. Lib. xxv., p. 176.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 185.
† Gio. Cambi, p. 38.—Ammirato,

many months made sad havoc of their lives and property and even arrested the wives and children of these unhappy and confiding princes *.

A.D. 1487. No sooner had this peace relieved Florence than Lorenzo with his allies' assistance bent every nerve to the recovery not only of Sarzana but Sarzanello, which had been surprised this year by the Genoese; he very soon satisfied his countrymen by the restoration of a place whose loss had stained the national honour, and the Genoese war itself was speedily terminated by that republic's submission to the Duke of Milan †. Florence was now once more in repose and Lorenzo after marrying his daughter to Franceschetto Cibo turned all his attention to the arts of peace and the encouragement of literature. At this marriage a cardinal's hat was promised to Giovanni de' Medici then but fourteen years old; an important event in Florentine history, as it led to his early pontificate under the name of Leo X. to the complete destruction of Florentine liberty, and to the subsequent exaltation of that family as hereditary princes of Tuscany ‡.

A.D. 1488. On the fourteenth of April 1488, a tragedy occurred in Romagna which if really instigated or abetted by Lorenzo as some authors have suspected and by which he afterwards profited, would show that he fully shared the vindictive feelings of an age in which neither time nor circumstances mitigated the deep desire of vengeance. Yet if vengeance, which says a French author, "*only adds crime to misfortune*," were ever justifiable; Lorenzo perhaps might have been excused, exclusive of the attempts on his own life, for not consigning his brother's murder to oblivion, had he not already been sufficiently bathed in blood, the blood too of victims either totally innocent, or infinitely less culpable than Riario. Lorenzo's conduct is open to more suspicion because the result of

* Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 187.—Porzio, Congiura de' Baroni, Lib. iii. p. 189, &c.

† Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

‡ Ammirato, Lib. xxv., pp. 179, 80.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 192.

this crime was to establish a strong Medician influence over both Forlì and Imola; and the failure of his original designs on the latter was believed to be one cause of quarrelling with Sixtus IV.

Girolamo Riario Count of Forlì and Imola, after the pope's decease had retired from Rome to that principality where he fully maintained the cruel and tyrannical character of the Romagnian tyrants and was accordingly murdered by three officers of his own body guard in connection with only six other conspirators.

Cecco del Orso, captain of the guards, with two more officers named Louis Panzero and Giacomo Ronco entered his chamber and poniarded him while the rest of his attendants were at dinner: they then, after parting his vestments amongst them, cast the naked and bloody corpse into the street where the people, who were loudly incited to revenge, instantly dragged it in triumph through the town. His widow Catharine Sforza and her children were forthwith arrested, and the whole city remained in the insurgents' possession, the citadel alone remaining faithful; nor would the governor listen to any orders except from Catharine herself when fairly at liberty. She accordingly promised to give these orders, and was therefore allowed to enter the fortress her children being kept as hostages; but no sooner had she entered than in defiance of her word the guns were turned on the citizens: they instantly threatened to kill her children: "and if you do," said she indignantly, "I have still a son at Milan and another within me who will live to revenge the deed"*.

* Muratori, Annali.—Corio, Parte vi., fol. 446.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 210. —Ricordanze di Tribaldo de' Rossi, Del. Erud. Tosc., tom. xxiii.—Macchiavelli. Bruto, and Muratori, (the last with some hesitation) give a less modest account of this reply; but I have followed Sismondi for the reasons which he gives, (vol. viii. p. 210, note.) Bayle is silent on it; but Bembo (Lib. iv., fol. 51) tells us that, in 1498, Venice counted on driving Caterina Sforza from Forlì, partly through the faction of Antonio Ordelaffo within, and partly "*on the hatred that the citizens bore to that immodest woman.*"

The people proved more tender or less resolute than Catharine and the threat was not executed; but the conspirators implored protection from Pope Innocent and Lorenzo de' Medici, both of whom they thought might benefit by the deed. Innocent commanded the governor of Cesina to render them every assistance, and Lorenzo pressed by Lodovico Sforza and Florentine interests, instantly despatched a strong force under the Count of Pitigliano and Rinuccio Farnese, ostensibly to aid Caterina, but really to recover possession of the fortified town of Piancaldoli in their way a place which Riario had captured in the late wars; and the object of both Pope and Medici there is some reason for supposing was to secure Forlì for their son Franceschetto Cibo the husband of Maddalena*.

In Marino Sanuto's chronicle, or diary, it is noted that Marco Barbo podestà and captain of Ravenna wrote to the Seignory of Venice an account of the whole conspiracy only two days after it happened, in which it "was said to be the work of *Giovanni Bentivoglio* and *Lorenzo de' Medici*, in order to give those towns to Franceschetto Cibo son of Pope Innocent VIII., who is the son-in-law of the said Lorenzo de' Medici." But this is evidently one of the hurried reports of an excited time which prove the general opinion then entertained of what Lorenzo would or might be guilty of, rather than his real culpability: he never directly assisted the conspirators though he refrained from opposing them, and Bentivoglio who was the Duke of Milan's soldier, actually despatched a large force to the aid of Caterina while her uncle Lodovico lost not a moment in sending further reënforcements from Milan, yet it is curious that Manfredi of Faenza who was in Florentine pay would not let him pass to attack the conspirators without Lorenzo's permission†.

* Ricordanze di Tribaldo de' Rossi, p. 241.—Del. Erud. Tosc., tom. xxiii. —Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 182.

† On this Tribaldo de' Rossi, a contemporary, says in his diary, after relating the above fact, "*For the present I will say no more.*" "*Per ora non dicho altro.*" Evidently intimating

These prompt succours soon reduced Forlì to order but the conspirators escaped to Siena: Ottoviano Riario was proclaimed lord of Forlì and Imola; Caterina regent; and the pope's troops, after having been diminished by some slaughter, were exchanged for Riario's children. Not long after this Lorenzo succeeded in marrying his cousin Giovanni de' Medici, a descendant of Cosimo's brother Lorenzo and grandfather of the Grand Duke Cosimo I. to this same Caterina Sforza, which made Forlì and Imola in a manner dependent on the Medici.

That Lorenzo had sufficient previous knowledge of this conspiracy to implicate him as an accomplice seems scarcely probable more especially as his son-in-law Cibo gained nothing by it; but that it was confidently believed he would rejoice in the event the following letter addressed to him from Lodovico and Cecco del Orso, two of the conspirators, affords undoubted testimony if not something more; and can scarcely be taken as exculpatory.

" Our most Worshipful and Magnificent Lorenzo. We are " certain that ere this your magnificence will have been in- " formed of the death of this iniquitous and cursed; I will not " say 'lord of ours;' because he did not merit to be so. But " *partly to perform our duty although we could not before do* " *so*, it seems good to us, considering his presumptuous rash- " ness and brutal conduct in audaciously wishing to *imbrue his* " *hands in the blood of your magnificent and exalted house, to* " *inform you of the cruel death we have justly inflicted on him.* " Your magnificence is probably aware how this tyrant besides " his household attendants maintained a hundred soldiers. The " Almighty so inspired us that braving every peril however great " we were firm in our resolution either to execute what we have " done or never to return. For considering the strong guard

that he could, if he wished, tell something more on the subject. (Vide *Ricordanze, Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, tom. xxiii., p. 241). Yet such solemn innuendos are always to be received with caution, as being frequently mere cloaks for pompous ignorance or timid malice.

" that this miscreant maintained, and we not being more than
" nine persons to effectuate what was contemplated, we con-
" sider it rather a divine than human work, as your magni-
" ficence may conjecture; because, excepting this cursed man
" and another like himself, not a drop of blood has been spilt;
" a thing beyond belief! Nothing can be better disposed or
" more firmly united than this community. We wish to inform
" your magnificence of all these things because you have been
" deeply injured and we are certain that *you will take singular*
" *pleasure in them.* We shall never be able to inform you of all
" his doings, yet partly to declare them, know then, that he not
" only hated the citizens, but utterly disregarded both God and
" the saints: he was a blood-sucker of the poor, regardless of
" his word, and in short loved nothing but himself. He had
" brought this town to the extremity of need, and in such a way
" that even our very breath was scarcely left to us. At length
" it has pleased the omnipotent God to liberate our people
" from the hand of this Nero, and what he wished to do with
" us God has enabled us to execute first on the tyrant's own
" head, because he would no longer permit such malignity
" and treachery as possessed this man. For his evil deeds,
" and for love of your magnificence of whom we are the
" servants; and for the good of the republic, and for our pro-
" per interest we have done the deed and liberated this our
" people from hell. Wherefore we pray your magnificence
" that in this our necessity you will lend that aid and favour
" that we hope from your magnificence, as well as your advice
" as to what we are to do in this our need, offering ourselves
" to your magnificence for as much as we are worth, to execute
" everything it may please you to command. We recommend
" ourselves to your magnificence, *quæ bene valeat.* And to
" the end that you may rest satisfied with all this we will con-
" sider how this cursed race may never more take root. And
" as regards the citadels we hope that in the course of this day

" we shall have one, and besiege the other so as to force it to " capitulate. From Forlì the 19th day of April 1488 "*.

About a month afterwards a scene more shocking and unnatural occurred at Faenza: Galeotto de' Manfredi lord of that city was married to the daughter of Giovanni Bentivoglio of Bologna, but her first affection was shortly changed into bitterness and ultimate detestation by his illicit amours; or as some say, instigated by her father who at Galeotto's death expected to gain possession of his property: be that as it may, her mind was worked up to so wild a pitch that the most dreadful deeds were desperately resolved upon. Concealing four murderers in her bedchamber she feigned indisposition and invited Galeotto to visit her; on his entrance they rushed suddenly from their lair and after a hard battle, for he was remarkable for strength and activity, would have been ultimately baffled had not his wife leaped from her bed and plunged a sword into his body during the struggle. Bentivoglio who still occupied Forlì flew to her assistance with the Bolognese and Milanese forces; Francesca had taken refuge with her son in the citadel where the people besieged them; for the latter, strange to say, were attached to the Manfredi, and exasperated at the unnatural murder; and all the vassals of Manfredo from Val di Lamone crowded tumultuously into the city suspicious of Bentivoglio's intentions, and resolved to fight for their independence: a conflict accordingly took place in which Bergamino the Milanese general was killed and Bentivoglio made prisoner. Antonio Boscoli the Florentine commissioner at Manfredo's court was then at Faenza; from him the citizens instantly demanded protection and Lorenzo, already alarmed lest Venice or Milan should possess themselves of this state listened readily to their prayer, the more so because Galeotto had before been disposed to part with it to that wily republic, which would have brought a powerful and dangerous neighbour conterminous with Florence.

* Roscoe, Life of Lorenzo, Appendix, Lib. xxi.

All her disposable forces under the Count of Pitigliano immediately moved on Faenza and arrested the march of fifteen thousand Bolognese who had risen to deliver their chief from captivity: Bentivoglio was however only detained as a hostage at Modigliana until Lorenzo settled the affairs of Faenza, for Florence as well as the Faentini, was suspicious of his intentions about that city. Eight citizens of Faenza and eight from Val di Lamone were placed in charge of young Astorre Manfredo their only three years old while Francesca was given into her father's hands; after this Bentivoglio was released and recommended to meet Lorenzo at his villa of Cafaggiolo in the Mugello where these friendly chieftains discussed their affairs at leisure; but the tragedy of Faenza increased Lorenzo's power and influence in Romagna to a greater extent than ever*.

The acts of Caterina Sforza and Francesca Bentivoglio are two impressive examples of female resolution and intensity of feeling: the one was driven by unrequited affection, real or imagined injury and perhaps some paternal influence, to an act of the deepest vengeance; the other was exalted by misfortune to a supernatural heroism: the husband of one was an odious tyrant pursued by the curses of a suffering people; that of the other a prince beloved by his subjects. Caterina risked some of her children's lives through devotion to her husband's memory and the duty of securing his inheritance to the rest; Francesca with her own hand sacrificed both her lord and every conjugal duty to her vindictive jealousy; yet the impulse of intense momentary feeling seems to have been the moving principle in both, and a rightly-managed Francesca might have equalled or even surpassed a Catharine.

During this period Genoa became the sport of civil war and incessant revolution. An alliance between Clara Sforza, natural

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 182.—Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Muratori, Annali.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 211. —Roscoe, Life of Lorenzo, chap. viii., p. 228.—Michele Bruto, Storia Fior., Lib. viii., p. 491.

daughter of Galeazzo-Maria the late duke of Milan, and Fregosino the illegitimate son of Cardinal Paulo Fregoso the reigning doge, had once more given that restless commonwealth into Milanese hands: this excited great anger, and Ibletto and Giovan-Luigi de' Fieschi two distinguished brothers conspired to dethrone him: after a succession of the most fierce and destructive combats in the streets of Genoa, Lodovico interfered with such effect as to place Agostino Adorno in the doge's chair with the title of ducal lieutenant for ten years; and in October 1488 Genoa became again a Milanese dependancy.

The storms of Genoese faction violent and frequent as they were, exceeded not the continued anarchy of Siena from the moment that Alphonso removed the weight of Neapolitan authority: exiles, proscriptions, violent and sanguinary executions filled the annals of that boisterous republic; every faction and order in the state was successively abolished, proscribed, or persecuted, and at every new revolution there were fresh massacres. The exiles, no longer scattered were now collected in large masses, the earlier victims of anarchy being reconciled in misfortune with the very men who had expelled them: they comprised all denominations, all factions, orders, and shades of politics, and agreed to fuse every hostile feeling amongst themselves into one present implacable and glowing indignation against their common enemy. Treaties of oblivion and amity were signed by different knots of them in different countries, various attempts were subsequently made for their own restoration, and all these ended successfully in 1487. One small party from Staggia; a petty fortress on the Florentine frontier made a bold assault and got into Siena more by good fortune than skill and seized the government; and in this enterprise was it that the celebrated Pandolfo Petrucci first began to take that lead in Senese politics which ended in his long-continued and absolute authority *.

* Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 203.—Orlan. Malavolti, Parte iii^a, Lib. v^o, fol. 81-93.

The condition of these two republics was not displeasing to Lorenzo who made alliances with both; a neighbouring example of well-regulated freedom alarmed him more than either anarchy or absolute sovereignty, for the former was unlikely to excite any dangerous feelings amongst the industrious masses of Florentine citizens, and the latter was too congenial to his own.

In the gonfaloniership of Nero Cambi towards the end of this year, when the new elections were to take place, it was discovered that in despite of the usual prohibition to quit the city during this period, several gonfaloniers of companies were missing; and as without a certain number the election of the Seignory could not proceed although the people were already assembled, all Florence was thrown into disorder. An express was promptly despatched for Piero Borghini, one of that body who was known to be at his villa, but he thinking there would be enough without him disregarded the order until a second horseman brought him up, booted and spurred as he was and splashed with dirt, into the presence of the Seignory who instantly punished his disobedience by admonition from every public office for three years. On the same occasion three other gonfaloniers of companies were also admonished from the three higher magistracies for being absent against orders. All this seemed a very just and natural exercise of authority in the supreme magistracy, especially as they had previously asked advice from the "Otto di Pratica," a council of high authority, which had left the whole matter to their own discretion. But when the new Seignory assumed their functions it was declared

A.D. 1489. *extremely presumptuous that without the participation of Lorenzo de' Medici, "prince of the government;"* who was then amusing himself at Pisa; such an exercise of authority should have taken place. Complaints were accordingly made to him by the sufferers and their friends; and he listening to one statement alone peremptorily commanded

the "Otto di Pratica" and the Senate of Seventy not only to reverse the sentence, but to admonish the gonfalonier Nero Cambi from all his rights of citizenship for having passed it! Such was Lorenzo's power, and such his jealousy of the slightest shadow of independence in the public actions of his fellow-citizens! For independent of other things the punishment of Nero Cambi was in direct violation of every privilege of the Seignory who were responsible for nothing but peculation after their official dignity had ceased *.

From this period until the death of Lorenzo Italy remained at peace and little of any moment occurred at Florence; his power augmented daily, and like a deep and rapid stream looked clear and smooth and beautiful until crossed by some obstacle; then its force mounted up and swept everything violently away. Nor was it alone in Florence that its strength and volume were felt; Lorenzo's true object and interest like Ferdinand's was peace and they held the balance in their hand: the unquiet nature of Alphonso was doubtful and dangerous, but Lorenzo ruled the unextinct energies of a powerful republic with the decision and unity of an absolute monarch and would allow no seeds of discord to be sown without an instantaneous effort to destroy: he influenced all the smaller states, and the vast weight of Florence cast on the side of one or other of the greater was never without its consequences. Disputes for instance occurred this year between Lodovico Sforza and Alphonso of Calabria about the former's virtually usurping the whole sovereign authority of Milan from his nephew; and these, partly by persuasion, and partly by threats of placing himself on the side of the injured party, Lorenzo settled as he did most others; for he was well convinced that nothing would prove more dangerous to his own authority than any increase of power in either of these potentates. By such

* Gio. Cambi, Storia, Fior. Del. Er. Tos., tom. xxi., p. 39.—Ammirato, Lib. 26, p. 183.

judicious management he maintained the peace of Italy, well knowing, that no ties, whether of relationship, or obligation, or personal attachment would ever have the beneficial effects that are produced by fear on sovereign princes *.

If Cosimo purchased the liberties of Florence Lorenzo received back the money with interest, not in power alone but in gold and silver: under the gonfaloniership of Piero Alamanni in July and August 1490 the disorder of his finances had become so great as to make a fresh grant of public money absolutely necessary to restore them, and in the year 1491, other fraudulent means were adopted to make up the deficiency. His extensive commercial establishments were necessarily left in the hands of agents who puffed up with the importance of their master's name, squandered his substance while they neglected his affairs: from the beginning his credit had been sustained by occasional grants of public money to a large amount; but now the evil was so alarmingly increased that a violent effort of the commonwealth became necessary to remove it, and that effort no less than public bankruptcy! On the thirteenth of August 1490, a Balià of seventeen members with the full powers of the whole Florentine nation was created to examine the condition of the coinage, the state of the various "*Gabelle*," and the public finances as connected with the private necessities of Lorenzo; to ascertain also what was spent on the occasion of making his son a cardinal, which with subsequent donations amounted to 50,000 florins. The disorder both of the public revenues, and the private resources of the Medici was extreme, the former having even been anticipated and spent by his own and his agents' extravagance: the portions of young women, already mentioned as forming a public stock based on national faith and moral integrity were the first and greatest sufferers; this branch of the public debt which previously paid three per cent. per annum was at once reduced

A.D. 1490.

* Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 184.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 26.

by the authority of the commission to half that interest; and the instantaneous fall of public credit reduced the "*Luoghi di Monte*," or shares of a hundred florins of public stock, from twenty-seven to eleven and a half! The young women who married were allowed a sufficient sum from their portions to pay the contract duty, which of course immediately returned to the treasury; the remainder was reserved, and a payment of seven per cent. promised at the end of twenty years!

One consequence of this was a sudden check to marriage; and when the portions were invested in public securities dowers of fifteen hundred, eighteen hundred, and even two thousand florins were given by parties of equal rank to make up the deficiency between real and nominal portions where eleven hundred had previously served. There were consequently few marriages except those accomplished by force of ready money, and even for these Lorenzo's permission became necessary!

"Now," says Giovanni Cambi, with all the indignation that might be expected from the son of the persecuted Neri, "now "let all reflect on what it is to set up tyrants in the city and "create Balìas, and assemble parliaments*." The depreciated currencies of Siena, Lucca, and Bologna affected that of Florence, so that to keep the silver coin in the country it was in like manner depreciated: this measure was considered fair and necessary at the moment by many; but for the people's quiet, who first and most sensibly feel such evils and who now justly began to murmur; it was announced as a measure for enabling government to pay those marriage portions which had been stopped the previous year. The public for a season appear to have acquiesced in this, not immediately perceiving that they were paying Lorenzo de' Medici's debts; but when this new money, called the "*Quattrino bianco*" was issued at one-fifth more than its real value and not taken by A.D. 1491.

* Gio. Cambi, Del. Erud. Tos., tom. xxi., p. 54.

the treasury for more than its actual worth, the citizens saw plainly that they were defrauded and that every species of taxation was virtually augmented by it to that amount, whereupon a deep murmur of indignation pervaded the community. Their anger was vain; Lorenzo's private necessities required the sacrifice and his power enforced it! Thus was this despot's fortune and mercantile credit reëstablished at the expense of his country more especially of his poorer fellow-citizens*; but after these cruel and scandalous proceedings it is falsely said by Macchiavelli and other historians that he abandoned all commercial enterprise, closed his establishments, and expended his ill-gotten capital in the purchase of land and the pursuits of agriculture †.

When Innocent VIII. made Giovanni de' Medici a cardinal ere the boy had completed the age of fourteen, being rather ashamed of his work he accompanied this honour by a stipulation that the hat was not to be worn for three years. That time had now elapsed, Innocent sent the long-desired insignia and thus prepared the way for a pontificate which encouraged Italian genius, and established Medician grandeur. The ceremony of assuming this hat was performed with great pomp on the tenth of March 1492, and on the ninth of the following April Lorenzo breathed his last at Careggi in the forty-fourth year of his age ‡.

A.D. 1492.

* Gio. Cambi, Del. Erud. Tos., tom. xxi., pp. 60-61.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 185.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 235.—Ricordanze di Trebaldi de Rossi, tom. xxiii., p. 277.—Del. Erud. Toscani.

† This error is proved not only by Guicciardini (Lib. i., p. 65) but more conclusively by three original documents, of their bank at Lyon. One dated 1478, in the names of *Lorenzo, Giuliano,* and *Sassetti;* another in 1485, with Lorenzo's name alone of the Medici; and a third, the most important, in 1494 on the 27th March, only a short time before Piero's fall, in his own and his near kinsman Lorenzo Tornabuoni's name. (Vide *Documenti di Storia Italiana,* vol. i°, p. 18, No. III.) A valuable publication by the learned, enterprising, and indefatigable Giuseppi Molini of Florence, from the original MSS. in the Royal Library at Paris, with short, clear, and characteristic notes by the able and learned Marchese Gino Capponi, a worthy representative of a great name.

‡ Such an event as Lorenzo's death

On his deathbed Lorenzo is said to have sent for Girolamo Savonarola, (whom he had always unsuccessfully courted), to confess and grant him absolution. The monk first demanded whether he placed entire faith in the mercy of God? and was answered in the affirmative. He next asked if Lorenzo were ready to surrender all the wealth which he had wrongfully acquired? And this, after some hesitation was also answered in the affirmative. The third question was if he would reëstablish popular government and restore public liberty? but to this he would give no answer, or according to others gave a decided negative; upon which the uncompromising churchman quitted him without bestowing absolution*.

This anecdote is contemptuously treated by Roscoe as only worthy of being noticed for the sake of confutation: but he does *not* confute it; and besides its insertion in the Life of Savonarola by the nephew of Lorenzo's great friend and companion Pico della Mirandola, it is in keeping with the character of both men. The character of Lorenzo de' Medici has been so frequently and so variously drawn that it becomes as difficult to know where to arrest the praises of his eulogists as the censure of his detractors. He, like every other celebrated man of a distant age and country, must be judged with full allowance for the manners and customs of the time, the force of habit, education, and circumstances, the prevailing ideas and opinions, and the definition of right and wrong as they were then generally understood and admitted. Revenge and ambition were in those days passions universally allowed to be not only justifiable but honourable and necessary, and human life of little comparative value: nay a skilfully executed vengeance even unto death was esteemed a

might be supposed to have been correctly recorded in Florence. Yet it is variously given by different authors (three of them cotemporaries) as having occurred on the 5th, 7th, 8th, and 9th of April! So difficult is it to discover the truth even about so simple, insulated, and notorious a fact! I have followed Giovanni Cambi because his attention was especially called to the date from his superstition about prognostics. (Vide *G. Cambi*, pp. 63-66.)

* Storia di Gir. Savonarola da Ferrara, p. 32, iv° Edit. Livorno, 1782.

proof of boldness and skill and called forth the approbation rather than the abhorrence of society: to a certain point it supplied the place of modern duelling, yet with this marked difference, that it was used to vindicate *real* injuries, not mere verbal insults. But if life were held thus cheap, liberty and property were still more lightly considered in the opinion and triumph of a successful faction. Taking such things into the account it is probable that Lorenzo was neither the sanguinary usurper of Sismondi nor the perfection of human nature and model of princes that Roscoe would wish us to believe. His most sanguinary act was allowing a massacre on his own personal account to continue for upwards of four days when he had the power to arrest it; and that alone may be deemed sufficient to justify Sismondi's strictures. But something even on this head may be said for a man who had just seen his only brother stabbed to the heart, himself wounded, and with difficulty saved; who knew that his own and his family's ruin was determined; who was uncertain of the extent of the conspiracy; and who excused such vengeance in some degree to his own conscience by the delusive idea of having left his cause in the people's hands. Sismondi records a number of events which he thinks are sufficient to justify the epithet of sanguinary executions, but which cannot all be fairly charged against Lorenzo in that odious signification. The banishment of hostile citizens under his father's direction in 1466 at eighteen years of age when treating with Luca Pitti can hardly be laid to his charge and was after all a mere following up of the usual Florentine course after the suppression of a most dangerous conspiracy. The death of Papi Orlandi's son in 1468 for an attempt to betray Pescia was also during his father's life and perfectly justifiable, inasmuch as the conspiring to deliver a fortified town into the hands of rebels and enemies is treason against the country whoever may be its ruler *. The attempts on Castelonchio and Prato were

* Ammirato, Lib. xxiii., pp. 100-110.

for the same reason justifiably punished; and the pillage and consequent massacre at Volterra was one of those unlucky accidents that war is subject to, but then more especially so from the difficulty of restraining an undisciplined army of mercenaries*. It was never intended by the commander nor does it appear that Lorenzo was even present when it occurred. The death of some Florentine exiles at San Quirico in 1485, was merely a conflict of civil war of so trifling a nature as not to be considered worthy of notice in the foregoing history; and the letter written to Elena Orsini Countess of Soana and Guido Sforza Count of Santa Fiore, to remove the Senese exiles who had encamped round Saturnia in 1483, is of a similar character, but belongs almost exclusively to the Senese history†. The reason why Sismondi calls them Florentines is not more easy to conjecture than that of his garbled extract from Lionardo Morelli which relates entirely to the *cause* of Volterra's revolt and the bloodshed which followed it *amongst the people themselves*, but not to the military massacre, as he would wish to make it appear‡.

That the Medici purchased the liberties of their country is

* L. Morelli, pp. 186-189.

† Ammirato's words are, "Fu scritto a Elena Orsina Contessa di Soana e a Guido Sforza Conte di Santafiore, che essendo loro vicini s' ingegnassero *levarseli dinanzi*." And Sismondi takes this last phrase as meaning to despatch them. This is certainly one of its significations; but it also means to remove them from the place they occupied, and in this sense is evidently intended by Ammirato; because they were much too numerous and well armed for murder, being the remains of a strong body of Senese exiles whose dislodgement would "*do great service to the league and benefit their own territory.*" But the historian adds, "they *dispersed of themselves, not having resources.*" (Am., Lib. xxv., p. 158.) Morelli's words are "Addì 26 d' Aprile 1472, e' Volterrani si rubellorono da' Fiorentini per certo sdegno di cagione di Allumi, che per invenzione si trovo ne' loro terreni. Egli arieno voluto l' utile in comune loro, che venne in privati cittadini quì della città; dove che ne seguì della terra loro, morte d' uomini. *Sarebbe lungo il dire delle cose; e però è ben tacere.* Quì si fece xx. uomini di guerra, e presono per Capitano, el Conte d' Urbino, e mandovisi el Campo, e a dì 16 di Giugno 1472, si riebbe, e andò a sacco; e dice che e' Sanese ci furono molti molestà, e che ebbono il cambio, per la cavalcata del Conte Carlo da Montona Capitano di Volterra, &c^a. (p. 189.)

‡ Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 158.—Malavolti, Lib. v., folio 88.—Sismondi, vol. viii., cap. xc., p. 250, *note*.—Lionardo Morelli, p. 189.

undoubted, and that the majority were willing to dispose of them is equally true; that the purchase-money was repaid with interest is not to be denied, and that Lorenzo put no bounds to his ambitious love of dominion will be universally admitted by the readers of Florentine history. His great object was himself and the aggrandisement of his family; and to these as far as he was able he made everything subservient, from the general politics of Italy to the domestic government of Florence. So great was his reputation that both the king of Naples and Lodovico of Milan feared his power, not alone, but as inclining the balance towards an adversary, and he has generally been considered as the guardian of Italian tranquillity*. It was his interest to be so, because war was costly and augmented discontent; it was perilous and encouraged rebellion, and every hour of peace consolidated more and more the weight of his personal authority. His influence with Lodovico and his general foresight might probably have preserved peace for a season; but whether he would have been able to avoid the wars that arose at his death is problematical, for they sprang from other causes over which he had no control and which were not ready for action while he ruled Florence. Certainly no prince or citizen, not even Cosimo, had more influence or reputation in Italy. To two things he is supposed principally to have directed his most earnest attention; namely to preserve such an equality amongst the mass of influential citizens that neither in private fortune nor public power any single individual should become formidable; while he at the same time endeavoured by every outward mark of moderation, familiarity, and respect, as well as by equity in the administration of justice (no political object intervening) to disarm jealousy and gain public favour. The second was that the petty states of Tuscany allied to Florence should be maintained in firm union with each other so as to oppose a steady front to greater and more distant potentates:

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 187.—Gio. Cambi, p. 67.

by such policy he doubled the power of his country and made her formidable to all her neighbours as a defensive state, and in this way by wielding with skilful and steady hand the energies of Florence without molesting any, he hoped if life had lasted to unite under his own single influence the states of Lucca, Siena, Perugia, Bologna, Città di Castello and all the lords of Romagna, so as to form a powerful confederacy against any violence. On the Genoese frontier he was safe, because independent of that republic's lost independence, the possession of Sarzana, Sarzanella, and Pietra Santa prevented any apprehensions: against danger on the Bolognese side he had strengthened Firenzuola in the Apennines; and Siena was kept at bay by the newly restored fortress of Poggio Imperiale, now Poggibonzi*.

Lorenzo spent large sums of money in continually-recurring games and festivals which were freely and politically given to the people; and as they were arranged and conducted by the first artists and literary men of the day they gradually refined the public taste and inspired a relish for something beyond the mere buffoonery of a common crowd: tournaments were not unfrequent, and all the public games partook of a classical, magnificent, and manly character. His patronage of literature and the arts need not be here spoken of; his own talents were universal and powerful, and music painting, poetry, sculpture and architecture had no better judge or patron than Lorenzo. His mode of life at home was simple and frugal as was still the general custom; in public he was grand and magnificent: whenever he left his house he was attended by ten servants with cloaks and swords as a guard, and after the Pazzi conspiracy he for three years was accompanied by four armed citizens besides the twelve guards that were decreed to him by the republic †. In discussion he was acute and eloquent; wise and prudent in resolve and rapid in execution. He delighted in men of a

* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.—Bruto, Lib. viii., p. 495. † Gio. Cambi, pp. 65-7.

biting and satirical turn, and loved all boyish sports and amusements to a degree that alarmed the gravity of more formal statesmen. He was often found romping with his children and mixing in all their games; so that, says Macchiavelli who probably knew him personally, "When we consider the light and careless, the grave and considerate, the free and voluptuous life of this man, two different beings united in almost impossible conjunction were distinctly perceptible."

A sudden peal of thunder and flash of lightning without rain in the clear and starlight night of the sixth of April 1492, startled the inhabitants of Florence; and their superstition was further excited next morning when it was known that the lantern of the Duomo had been struck with terrific force and the fall of a marble block of three thousand pounds weight which breaking through the solid cupola like paper destroyed the banner of the Medici in its course and fell on the pavement without a fracture. Lorenzo having for some time previous been confined at Careggi in great suffering this event was received as a sure prognostic of his death *.

He was attended in his last moments by Piero Leoni a celebrated physician of the day, and, says Giovanni Cambi, "The night that Lorenzo died two young citizens of his satellites took Leoni to a little distance from the place by night and as is reported cast him into a well which was a great pity; afterwards it was said that he had thrown himself down in a fit of despair. God pardon them." There seems to be still some doubt of the real author of Piero Leoni's death, and Lorenzo's eldest son Piero de' Medici has not escaped suspicion though Trebaldo de' Rossi denies it, and asserts that Leoni committed suicide †.

Lorenzo left three sons; Piero the eldest married Alfonsina

* Gio. Cambi, tom. xxi., p. 63, Del. Er. Tos.—Ricordanze di Tribaldo de' Rossi, Del. degli Eru. Toscan., tom. xxxiii., p. 274.

† Ricordanze di Trib. de Rossi, tom. xxiii., pp. 275, 279, Del. Eru. Toscani.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 186. —Gio. Cambi, p. 61.

Orsino; Giovanni, afterwards Leo X. and Giuliano who was a child when his father died. His eldest daughter Lucrezia married Jacopo Salviati, another, Maddalena, became the wife of Franceschetto Cibo. A third, Contessina, was united to Piero Ridolfi, and a fourth Luisa, who married her cousin Giovanni de' Medici, died early *. "Piero," exclaims Cambi, "was guilty of every vice, wherefore we may hope that by the grace of God, the city will soon be free from tyrants; for the citizens are aware of their error" †.

CONTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—England: Edward IV. to 1483, then Edward V. for scarcely three months, then Richard III. until 1485, then Henry VII. —Scotland: James III. until 1487, then James IV.—France: Louis XI. until 1483, then Charles VIII.—Naples: Ferdinand.—Spain: Ferdinand and Isabella.—Conquest of Granada, 1492.—German Emperor, Frederic III. —Burgundy: Maria until 1482, then Philip.—Pope, Sixtus until 1484, then Innocent VIII.—Ottoman Empire: Mahomet II. until 1481, then Bayezid or Bajazet II. who was the first Sultan inclined to peace.

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* Macchiavelli, Lib. viii.

† The histories of both Macchiavelli and Bruto terminate with the death of Lorenzo; but the works of Macchiavelli in various ways continue the history of his time. Bruto is no great loss, and seems overrated as an historian; he draws from few sources, is prejudiced, and not to be trusted in his abuse of the Medici without the authority of others. Living much with the Florentine refugees at Lyon, he imbibed their passions prejudices and party spirit as is said, and thus tainted his writings. He lived from 1513 to 1594. Macchiavelli from about 1469 to 1526.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM A.D. 1492 TO A.D. 1495.

THE death of Lorenzo de' Medici forms an important epoch in Italian history, for from that time forth a dark and angry torrent drove furiously down on the Peninsula until every vestige and even the very name of independence was swept into oblivion. It may be said that Venice alone escaped; for the temporal sovereignty of Rome was distracted and controlled by the great transalpine monarchies: yet just before, excepting some remains of hostility between Florence and Genoa which were speedily obliterated, all Italy was in profound repose*; she was ruled more or less wisely by Italian princes, unshackled by strangers, guarded by native soldiers, and collected within her own natural limits†. She is described at this epoch as abounding in riches, population, and commerce; as studded with splendid cities, each the glittering capital of a small principality or the metropolis of a powerful state; as the temple of religion; the seat of arts and science; the academy of literature; the school of philosophy; and the bower of taste and refinement; and had her morality only kept pace with her intellect she would have proved a glorious example to the world. Yet the melancholy fact is nowhere more visible than in Italian history, of the slight influence, independent of religion, which is exercised over our moral nature by the single

A.D. 1492.

* Hence it appears that Genoa, as before, still retained a certain power of independent action which her subjection to Milan did not destroy; and these still remaining hostilities were terminated by the mediation of Lodovico.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 187.

force of learning, refinement, and intellectual cultivation: some of the very men who are most execrated for their wanton cruelty, tyranny, and unscrupulous licentiousness, are to be found amongst the greatest patrons and lovers of those arts and sciences which are supposed to soften and civilise mankind.

Many causes at this time united to produce and preserve Italian tranquillity; dynasties had been changed or separated from ancient connections, states had lost their liberty; the fiercer pontiffs had past away, and long wars had exhausted the Peninsula; but general opinion mainly attributed it to the pervading influence of Lorenzo de' Medici, and the calamities that immediately followed his death brought this reputation into bolder and brighter relief than it perhaps really deserved; for who will assert that Lorenzo de' Medici could have averted the subsequent misfortunes of his country*?

Before we enter on the narrative of this new and momentous era, momentous not only for Italy but the whole civilised globe; an era marked by ambition, war, science, geographical discovery, noble inventions, religious innovation, and a bold spirit of adventure and intellectual inquiry that gushed with unwonted prodigality upon the soil of Europe and streamed in painful splendour over the new discovered world. Before we enter upon this epoch it may be convenient to give a rapid view of the political state of those nations that sooner or later were to be affected by the coming change.

The Asiatic and African states bordering on Europe were ruled by the Soldan of Egypt and Syria and the Turkish Bajazet: this sultan's sway was extended over Greece, Thrace, and Macedonia, part of Sclavonia, and those countries bordering the Black Sea. His armies were numerous, permanent, and strictly disciplined; and his power would have deepened the alarm already excited by Amurath and Mahomet, had he

* Gio. Cambi, p. 67.—Guicciardini, Istoria de' Italia, Lib. i., pp. 3-10.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. iº, p. 26.

not, after tranquillising his own states, exhibited a more pacific disposition than either. His military enterprises were almost exclusively against the warlike Soldan of Egypt from the confines of whose state to the Atlantic ocean the African hills and plains were ruled for the most part by potentates of little force or consideration. The chief of them at this epoch and far beyond the rest in power, riches, and extent of dominion, was Mahomed King of Tunis: the sovereigns of Marocco and Fez were next in political importance but inferior to Mahomed.

The recent conquest of Granada had just given all Spain, turbulent and disjointed as it was, to Ferdinand and Isabella; she Queen of Castile, he King of Aragon and Sicily *. They had conquered Granada, humbled the Spanish aristocracy, introduced the inquisition under Ximenes, driven eight hundred thousand Jews, the most industrious of their subjects, from the country, and in 1484, exhibited the first "*Auto de Fe*," to a superstitious and trembling multitude.

Portugal under John II. was fast advancing in civilisation and constitutional improvement while reviving the bold spirit of geographical discovery and commercial enterprise. Charles VIII. young, presumptuous, vain, and untalented, reigned over France, which with the annexation of Artois Brittany and Burgundy became a compact and powerful kingdom: the feudal system was nearly destroyed as it affected regal authority, and the French barons under their brave but empty monarch were ready for every enterprise.

In England the sagacious Henry VII. now reigned paramount; he had terminated the civil wars on Bosworth field, united the adverse Roses by marrying the fifth Edward's sister, and while holding the nation more firmly in hand by a diminution of feudal potency and turbulence, he exalted the royal dignity, vindicated the supremacy of law, encouraged commerce and discovery, and maintained his own independence by a rigid and even parsimonious economy.

* Lettere di Principi, vol. ii., p. 2, Venice Edit., 1575.

Scotland too at this epoch enjoyed under James IV. a little respite from her troubles, during which, civilisation made some advance and learning was promoted by the foundation of a native university.

Holland Flanders and Burgundy were ruled by Philip son of Maximilian emperor of Germany; but this last monarch great in rank and title was poor in riches and authority; for besides the independent princes of his land, no less than seventy free cities united in one indissoluble league, asserted their right to liberty and self-government.

Mathias Corvinus the celebrated son of John Hunniades died in 1490, and was succeeded on the throne of Hungary by Vladislas King of Bohemia who ruled both kingdoms while his nephew Alexander held the Polish sceptre.

The Swiss confederacy existed in its usual state of domestic liberty and foreign mercenary warfare; not always true to the gold for which they sold their blood and callous to every nobler sentiment beyond their rugged frontier.

From her wealth, territory, internal union, and unflinching constancy of purpose, Venice was the most formidable state of the Italian peninsula. Ambitious, powerful by land and water; impregnable; wise; severe but comparatively just in legislation; subtile; prudent in success; firm in misfortune; her strength was employed with fixed regards on her own aggrandisement, unscrupulous of means and heedless of consequences to others. From the sphere of her own domestic tranquillity she quietly watched the turns of her neighbours' fortune, and even when unsuccessful in war was sure to make up for it by skilful negotiation, for she exhausted patience by a stedfast pertinacity. Besides her possessions in Istria, Sclavonia, Dalmatia, and much eastern dominion; she was now mistress of Treves, Padua, Verona, Vicenza, Brescia, Ravenna, Bergamo, Crema, Rovigo and the Polesine with all their fair and rich domains in Lombardy; and thus she became a just object of alarm to

all the Italian states. She inspired the more fear because a change was hopeless; Venice was not ruled by one ephemeral man; an everlasting council with one object, one policy, one concentrated force unceasingly influenced her movements, and from this there was no retreat: kings died or changed; republics were convulsed, weakened, and disordered; pontiffs followed each other in rapid succession; all these brought changes, but Venice never quitted the field.

After Venice Naples was then esteemed the most powerful state, not so much perhaps from its extent or opulence as from the sagacity of Ferdinand joined to Alphonso's warlike talents and energy; indeed with an able military sovereign she must have been superior to Venice because unsuspicious and uncontrolled, whereas the latter was ever distrustful and jealous of her own mercenary commanders. Naples abounded in natural riches, in a long and tortuous coast with numerous ports and havens commanding three quarters of the compass, while on the fourth from Terracina through the Abruzzi and Sabine hills, and by the city and domains of Aquila it was conterminous with the papal territory and strongly influenced that state's internal movements.

The temporal power of Rome was never adequate to conquer Italy though always sufficient to prevent others from doing so, and at this epoch depended more on the character of the reigning pontiff than on the nominal extent of ecclesiastical territory: an able and conscientious pope untainted with nepotism and judiciously combining priestly influence with the temporal power of a skilful ruler, might have swayed all Italy; and any pontiff however weak, had the means, and generally the inclination, to disturb it*. If we may judge from the proportional scale of her contributions to a general league the church was at this period considered equal to Venice Naples or Milan in her financial ability: her domi-

* Macchiavelli, Discorsi, Lib. i°, cap. xii.

nion extended from the Neapolitan frontier over the Campagna of Rome, the March of Ancona, Umbria, Romagna, and a great part of Tuscany; but it was more nominal than real, because almost every great city was ruled independently by some potent citizen or long established seignior, and the pontiff was only acknowledged as lord paramount.

Amongst these petty sovereigns who are described as so many leeches sucking the blood of Italy, Guido da Montefeltro governed Urbino: Giulio Varano, Camerino: Bentivoglio was the chosen lord of Bologna: Caterina Sforza and Giovanni de' Medici ruled Imola and Forlì for her son Riario: young Astorre Manfredo was protected at Faenza by the Florentines: a Sforza still swayed the destinies of Pesaro; the Malatesti reigned in Rimini but shorn of their ancient splendour; the fierce Baglioni were uncontrolled at Perugia; the Vitelli in Città di Castello; in Ferrara were the Esti; who also held the imperial fiefs of Reggio and Modena; but all the rest was ecclesiastical property.

Rome itself was divided and often ungovernable: the Orsini and Colonna were the great adverse leaders of faction; with these last were the ancient and powerful Savelli; with those the Conti or Grapelli, almost their equals in riches antiquity and splendour. Virginio and Niccòla Orsini; Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna; Jacopo Conti and Antonello Savelli were the most renowned chiefs of these destructive parties. The pontiffs and Colonnesi had been always enemies; but the general ecclesiastical policy was to encourage contention in both factions until mutually exhausted by hostilities, when the pontiff was certain to pounce upon some of their possessions adjacent to the capital. For these and other reasons the great Roman barons could never quietly suffer a sovereign, especially a foreign priest, and frequently manifested their aversion, as many a pontiff had unpleasantly experienced*.

* Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., dal 1494 al 1523, MS.—Paulo Giovio, Istorie, Lib. 1°.

Siena, now greatly degenerated in riches power and political influence, after a period of the fiercest anarchy had just fallen under the strong hand of Pandolfo Petrucci who with all the strength of a vigorous mind and unscrupulous conscience, a concentrated authority and a forced union of the citizens, revived in some degree the ancient credit and political importance of his country. Lucca, decayed, weak, languid and insignificant, and ever jealous of Florentine interference; clung rather to Milan and the emperor whom she paid for his protection, than existed as an independent state, yet as regarded Florence was always capable of mischief *.

Genoa, divided into the aristocratic, the popular, and plebeian factions, had been torn to pieces by the struggles of the Adorni and Fregosi, both of the popular order and Ghibeline party: this broke in upon the two great Italian sects, for Guelphs assisted Ghibelines, and Ghibelines Guelphs, according to circumstances; the consequence was violent struggles, anarchy, exhaustion, and ultimate subjection to Milan.

Vercelli, Augusta, Turin, Ivrea, and all Piedmont belonged to the then infant Duke of Savoy and with his transalpine possessions formed a powerful and important principality connecting the Italian states with the French monarchy. The Marquis of Monferrato then also a minor, governed a small principality on the confines of Milan and Piedmont, as the Marquis of Mantua did on the Venetian frontier: but Mantua was important from the strength and position of its capital and the general military character of the Gonzaghi who so long had possessed it.

Milan was nominally governed by Giovan-Galeazzo Sforza now about twenty-four years old; but really by Lodovico the "Moor;" a crafty, vain, and cruel, but sagacious and ambitious prince who grasped at everything and was as unscrupulous in his means as relentless in their employment: but his

* Fran. Cei, Memorie Storiche, dal 1494 al 1523, MS. in the author's possession.

rule though severe was not generally unjust, wherefore he gathered popularity from the mass whose joys and sorrows are but seldom noticed in history; and unpopularity from the great who form the prominent points of it.

The Duke of Milan was imbecile or nearly so; but his wife Isabella's father Alphonso regarded with an impatient eye every movement of Lodovico and always asserted his son-in-law's right to govern alone, in which event he himself would have virtually ruled the duchy. This jealousy led to continual altercations, and one of Lorenzo's hardest tasks was to maintain tranquillity between them. Lodovico's brother Ascanio, one of the richest and most powerful cardinals in Rome, had great influence with the college and Pope Alexander VI.; but was in strong opposition to the fiery della Rovere Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli, and deeply influenced the subsequent politics of the papal court. The Duchess Isabella of Milan, a woman of uncommon beauty and spirit, saw clearly through Lodovico's duplicity and alarmed for the duke entreated her father and grandfather to interfere: much intercommunication followed without any successful result, and in this state of jealous agitation were the courts of Milan and Naples at the death of Lorenzo.

Florence had as yet lost none of her commercial energy therefore profited by universal peace and dipped and rose again with playful buoyancy above the waves of misfortune. A rapid increase of riches spread through the community; new and magnificent edifices sprung up, amongst which the Pitti and Strozzi palaces were preëminent; arts and artists, literature science and philosophy flourished; a higher and more refined style of living was making progress, and peace and civilisation mixed hand in hand with almost every transaction of the community *.

Lorenzo de' Medici's close family alliance and strong influence with Innocent VIII. added greatly to his personal weight amongst the Italian states and secured him a voice

* Ammirato, Lib. xxv., p. 180.—Paulo Giovio, Storie, Lib. i°, pp. 1—11.

potential in all discussions on general politics. Aware that his own and his country's salvation would be endangered by the increase of power in any native state, he sedulously endeavoured as we have said to preserve the existing balance, which was only to be gained by the continuance of peace, and this last only by a lynx-eyed inspection of every accident however trifling that might tend even remotely to destroy the general equilibrium. For similar views and reasons Ferdinand of Naples, when unstimulated by the restless spirit of his son, entirely concurred with him: he had subdued his barons, but as fire, and the smouldering remains were ready to flare up at the slightest breath of war. Alphonso's just indignation against Lodovico Sforza although fully shared by Ferdinand was not enough to shake his policy which opposed the alarming power of Venice together with the pretensions of France to Naples, while he knew that the hatred of his own nobility would by French intrigue most surely be roused into action and he therefore cordially joined Lorenzo in preserving the closest alliance with Milan. Lodovico himself, intriguing and unquiet as he was, became too sensible of this necessity; too fearful of Venice; and too anxious for self-preservation to make any difficulty, notwithstanding his distrust of both these princes: he was confident of Lorenzo's support whom he knew to be equally jealous of them, and believed that the inveterate hatred between Venice and Naples would prevent any combined attack on Milan which was his only fear; for single-handed neither of them gave him much apprehension.

This triple union in the bond of peace based on reciprocal interests, though sometimes interrupted had never been destroyed: it was no new policy of the Sforzeschi or Medici, and the league as we have seen was renewed in 1480 for five-and-twenty years: this was principally with a view to check the Venetians who were attentively watching for every accident likely to disturb it and open a road for themselves to the final subjugation of Italy.

The confederacy was sufficient in physical strength to curb such ambition; and the very suspicion and jealousy that existed between its members, who keenly watched and promptly checked each other's motions, tended to maintain tranquillity: of such necessity is one real, single, and common object for the maintenance of international peace, whatever be the motives that lead to it; and where this is wanting, adieu to treaties, which being only the formal expression of mutual interests are violated at the pleasure of the strongest.

In this state was the Italian peninsula and with every prospect of uninterrupted calm when the premature death of Lorenzo de' Medici rolled over it like a peal of thunder and commenced the storm. "He stood between Milan and Naples as the Corinthian isthmus between the Ægean and Ionian seas, arresting the tumultuous mixture of their angry waves" *.

Lorenzo had scarcely been dead three months when Pope Innocent followed and this gave a second shock to public tranquillity; because independent of the Medici's beneficial influence that pontiff, made cautious by his first war and occupied with self-indulgence, was indisposed to disturb it. Not so his successor Roderigo Borgia who was chosen sixteen days after and assumed the tiara on the eleventh of August 1492 under the denomination of Alexander VI.

A native Spaniard, and nephew of Calixtus III, he was the oldest and richest of the sacred college and gained his election partly by the disputes between the Cardinal of San Piero and Ascanio Sforza, but more decidedly by the force of his own wealth and liberal promises. He with the most open and shameless effrontery corrupted every influential person that would be bribed in Rome, where scarcely a man withstood his influence; Ascanio Sforza unscrupulously sold himself and his religion and resolved to associate so many others in his iniquity as

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, p. vii.

to avoid any peculiar reproaches. He was promised not only the vice-chancellorship, the highest ecclesiastical office, but also churches and castles and even Borgia's private palace, filled as it was with the rarest and most valuable articles of furniture *.

Bribery had, doubtless been often before resorted to under various forms in papal elections; but never until now, according to cotemporary authors, was it so openly, so unblushingly, so indiscriminately, or so audaciously exercised; and the public were still more scandalised because of Borgia's infamous character which though not universally apparent was well known to many and suspected by all. In him, we are told by Guicciardini, were united a singular diligence, attention, and sagacity, with excellent counsel, wonderful powers of persuasion, and in the despatch of important business incredible care and dexterity. But these virtues were far outdone by his vices: no sincerity; no shame; no truth; no fidelity; no religion: the most obscene habits; insatiable avarice; immoderate ambition; a more than barbarian cruelty, and the most intense desire of exalting, no matter how, his natural children, of whom there were many and some of them no less detestable than the father himself †.

Piero de' Medici was but twenty-one years of age when his father died, therefore ineligible to the offices held by the former; but such was Lorenzo's authority and so tempered was the free spirit of Florence that he instantly succeeded to every public employment, and to him were addressed, and by him received, the condolence and congratulation of foreign ambassadors as if he had ascended an hereditary throne; but as talent is not hereditary the different character and abilities of father and son were soon apparent to the world.

* Platina says that the palace was given to Battista Orsino, who was afterwards put to death by Alexander, and thus differs from Guicciardini.

† They were, Cesare, Francesco, Giuffrè, and Lucrezia Borgia.—Francesco Cei, Memorie Storiche, dal 1494 al 1523 MS.—Gio. Cambi, p. 71.—Platina, Vite de' Pape.—Muratori, Annali.—Guicciardini, Stor. d'Italia, Lib. i°, p. 9.—Paulo Giovio, Stor., Lib. i°, p. 8.

Strong, active, and agreeable in his manner, with a harmonious voice and fluent speech, the young lord of Florence was devoted to youthful pleasures unmodified by graver occupations: he excelled in every manly sport and amusement and made their professors his companions, so that while Lorenzo was encompassed by all the learning and talent of the age his son was surrounded by the most famous players of *Calcio*, *Pallone*, wrestling, boxing, and other athletic exercises. This was neither surprising nor blameable, and had it been redeemed by more solid qualities would have been praiseworthy: yet Piero was by no means deficient in literary acquirements or poetical taste and feeling; Poliziano who was his tutor had made him a good classical scholar; he was not a bad "*Improvisatore;*" his conversation was varied and agreeable, but his pride intolerable. The seeds of haughtiness sprouting in the heart of a Medici could scarcely fail to receive their full development in the son and husband of an Orsini.

Piero was that which in the present day would be called a gallant and accomplished gentleman; but he was also an example of the worthlessness of all these ornaments in a statesman if not based on more estimable qualities, as well as their delusive indication of real talent: in Lorenzo they were the highest polish of solid gold; in Piero the false glitter of flimsy tinsel. The state had bound itself to receive his orders; but the thought and application necessary to give them strength and vitality was beneath him: his confidence was perhaps justly placed in Lorenzo's secretary Piero Dovizio of Bibbiena an experienced man, but one whose exaltation and excessive pride had given offence to the old republican magistracy, and Piero by leaving the public business in his hands, and devoting his own time entirely to amusement and the most culpable debauchery, increased this discontent. Piero da Bibbiena's own arrogance also embittered the natural irritability of the haughty Florentines at seeing the obscure denizen of a subject and insignificant town commanding them with absolute

authority. An incident that occurred about this time exhibits both the individual spirit and general subjection of the citizens: Paulo Antonio Soderini, son of the famous Tommaso and closely connected with the Medici, wishing to marry his son to a daughter of Filippo Strozzi had communicated his intentions to Piero de' Medici not only to ask his advice but to procure his leave for the match, without which licence, (so complete was the public subjugation) no marriage could take place in Florence! The Medici willingly acquiesced, but when this reached the ears of Piero Dovizio he remonstrated on the grounds that it was directly in the teeth of Lorenzo's policy, who never would have thus consented to unite riches and political power in the same family, for the Strozzi were a very noble and opulent race: nor was he content with this, but on hearing that the wedding was already over he with true official insolence rated Paulo Antonio so harshly as to receive a box on the ear in return; and with this spirited answer withdrew in indignation from Soderini's presence. It was not then or at any time the custom amongst republican Florentines to resent such injuries nor yet insulting language by a challenge; the blow might occasionally produce a stab, but verbal insults even of the grossest nature were either returned with interest or treated with the coolest and most philosophical contempt. Dovizio therefore powerful as he was, dissembled for the moment but took the earliest means of removing Soderini from his sight by appointing him to the embassy at Venice *.

The more Piero felt his own unpopularity the more was his jealousy excited against those who with greater talent approached nearest to him in rank, fortune, and public consideration, and his own third cousins, Lorenzo and Giovanni, the descendants of old Cosimo's brother, were among the first to experience it. This branch of the Medici had been quietly accumulating riches by commerce and hitherto seem to have taken no part in public

* Jacopo Nardi, Hist. Fioren., Lib i°, p. 15.—Fil. Nerli, Lib. iii°, p. 58.

affairs. Giovanni was the widower of Luisa, Piero's sister, after whose death suspicions and differences began, which were kept up by those that were already plotting the ruin of Piero, and soon broke out into open hostility: the exact cause, though never accurately ascertained, was supposed to be Piero's jealousy of their extreme popularity *. This quarrel had serious political consequences, and though begun soon after Lorenzo's death if not before, only broke out with full violence at a later period, the account of which to avoid future interruption may here be anticipated.

Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici was considered by far the handsomest as well as one of the richest of the Florentine youth; he was held in distinguished honour from his family connexions, enjoyed great popularity, and thus became a sort of rival to his cousin Piero in everything but political power. It happened one night when these two accidentally met at a masked ball that both were occupied with the same lady, but the pride and impetuosity of Piero brooking no rival, he in feigned ignorance of Giovanni's person not only treated him with scorn, but threw the contents of an inkbottle over his cloth of silver tunic. Giovanni either from a desire to remain unknown, or not wishing just at that moment to break with Piero, took this outrage quietly; but on meeting him at a second festival in similar circumstances near the same lady, Piero tore the mask from his face, upon which Giovanni drew a dagger and in his brother's presence struck Piero on the breast: a cuirass saved him: but his supposed fate threw the whole house into confusion and next morning both brothers were denounced before the magistracy with Piero's commands for condign punishment. His first object was their lives; but at the instance of more prudent friends who represented the dangerous example that would be shown to others if he shed the blood of his own family, this was changed to banishment; Giovanni to his villa

* Fil. Nerli, Lib. iii°, p. 58.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i., p. 16.

of Trebbia and Lorenzo to Olmo-a-Castello. They quitted Florence on the 14th of May apparently reconciled with Piero, after having been accompanied to their houses by a large number of citizens and other inhabitants with strong expressions of public sympathy.

Soon after this in secret concert they simultaneously broke their confinement, crossed the frontier, and by means of Lodovico Sforza took refuge at the court of Charles VIII. who was then in Italy*. The public sympathy so openly and unequivocally expressed for his cousins increased Piero's malevolence, and their subsequent flight diminished his reputation and concentrated the public hatred against him: this was the first and one of the principal causes of his ruin; for after Lorenzo's death a strong party of distinguished citizens had alienated themselves from his son not from love of liberty but disappointed ambition; and through their exertions were Giovanni and his brother saved, either from the scaffold or perpetual imprisonment and confiscation of property†.

Piero de' Medici neither from his age nor other qualifications was adequate even to the steady government of Florence in her calmest mood, still less so in the face of such a storm as now began to threaten Italy. Scarcely had he assumed the government when in direct opposition to Lorenzo's policy and what was infinitely more dangerous to him, without reference to the principal citizens as had ever been the family

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, p. 64.—Filip. Nerli, Lib. iii., p. 58.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 197.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 16. — Ricordanze di Treb. de' Rossi, tom. xxiii., Del. Erud. Tos., p. 291—295.—Origine e Discendenza de' Medici, p. 90, MS.—Jacopo Pitti attributes this quarrel and condemnation of the two Medici entirely to their having given a public affront to the Seignory and Piero by inviting the Bishop of Saint Malo to their villa instead of the public lodging prepared for him by order of the government. They excused it as being gentlemen of the King of France's household which connexion alarmed Piero and his party. (Vide *J. Pitti*, Lib. i°, p. 28.) He also asserts that the mitigation of the sentence was due entirely to Piero, but in this he differs from cotemporary authors.

† Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i., p. 27.—Filippo Nerli, Commen., Lib. iii., p. 58.

custom; he at once drew much closer than was politic, the ties of connexion with Naples, and thus gave just cause of alarm to Lodovico Sforza who foresaw his own ruin in the union of these two powers against him *.

This step was taken through the influence of Virginio Orsino one of Piero's own relations and a dependant of Ferdinand and Alphonso; but though at first kept secret it could not long be concealed from the jealous regards of Lodovico and was the seed of all subsequent misfortunes. Thus two evils had already arisen from Lorenzo's death. Lodovico's great weakness was vanity; he believed himself superior to the rest of the world in prudence, wisdom, sagacity; and affected new and original modes of action. In arranging the accustomed embassies of congratulation to the new pontiff he proposed with much apparent reason, that those of the league should unite as one mission with one orator and one common oration; this was intended as a visible sign of their close internal union, not only to check any hostile designs of Alexander on the general tranquillity, but also to intimidate Venice and repress foreign cupidity or interference in Italian affairs. Such counsel, intrinsically good, was enforced by the recent example of Innocent VIII. who because the various embassies were disunited believed that the whole league was so, and thence ran blindly into the error of attacking one of its principal members. Lodovico's project was therefore accepted by Ferdinand and the Florentines, against Piero's secret wishes but without any publicly expressed opposition.

The natural vanity of youth unsteadied by judgment inclined him to magnificence and ostentatious display, and so fair an occasion could scarcely occur for such exhibitions, as that of being the principal leader of a solemn embassy from the Florentine republic to the high priest of Christendom. A union of all the embassies would have confounded his particular spark in the

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 27.

general blaze, as a single speaker would also have deprived the Florentine orator Gentile Bishop of Arezzo's more culpable vanity of an occasion to display his powers of eloquence before the pope and cardinals. He therefore, as we are informed by Guicciardini, strange as it may appear in Lorenzo's tutor, sedulously encouraged the volatility of Piero who with some plausible reasons secretly induced Ferdinand to acquiesce in his desire. The king although politically anxious to satisfy this youth's vanity, by no means wished to do it at the expense of a quarrel with Lodovico and therefore informed him of his reasons for changing.''

The circumstance was intrinsically of trifling moment except as an index to more serious facts; but the Moor was indignant at this slight, and alarmed at so clear a proof of that intimacy between Florence and Naples which became daily more palpable. Another and more serious incident increased the excitement and accelerated the catastrophe. Franceschetto Cibo then residing at Florence, by Piero's advice sold the fiefs of Anguilara, Cervetri, and several smaller castles near Rome to Virginio Orsini who received a great part of the purchase-money from Ferdinand. These places as well as most of the Orsini estates being situated about Rome, Viterbo, and Civita Vecchia, maintained a line of political intercourse with Naples, and the pope thus saw himself bearded in the heart of his dominions by one of his most powerful barons supported by two unfriendly states in close family connection; for Orsino was related both to the Medici and Naples; and it had always been one of Ferdinand's objects to possess some strongholds in the papal territory that might connect him with the factious nobility.

Now Ascanio Sforza being all-powerful at the court of Rome Lodovico considered any detriment to the papal authority as a personal affair, wherefore in conjunction with this cardinal he urged the pontiff to prevent such encroachments, for it became apparent that Ferdinand and not Virginio, was the real possessor of the

property. Alexander as liege lord refused to sanction the purchase or submit to be so bridled by Ferdinand, but Orsino was firm though secretly advised by both Sforzas to compromise the affair, while Ferdinand counselled the reverse.

The latter, after having given Orsino his cue, entered into a hollow negotiation with the pope, acceded to terms that he had instructed Virginio to refuse; amused Alexander with the hopes of a marriage between Alphonso's natural daughter and his son, and held the matter for a while in suspense and uncertainty. Lodovico at the same time endeavoured to impress on the light-minded Piero the soundness of Lorenzo's policy; he was earnestly advised to follow it out and become the peacemaker of Italy; and to use all his influence with Virginio in order to prevent any disturbance of the general tranquillity. Seeing all his efforts vain, that Piero blindly and exclusively resolved to follow Ferdinand and Alphonso, knowing also that his own safety depended mainly on Florentine support, which now failed him, he determined to search for other means of self-preservation. One of the first symptoms of this resolution was his paying half the expense of Alexander's army just then raised under Giovanni Sforza of Pesaro and Giulio Orsino to chastise Virginio, without the usual previous notification to other members of the league*.

Alexander VI. was not more disposed to be blinded by Ferdinand's wiles than Lodovico by Piero's insincerity; nor was he driven from his purpose even by the former's humility, who seeing things take a more serious turn had finally used his influence to overcome the pertinacity of Orsino. A league between Venice Milan and Rome, which Ferrara subsequently joined, was published in April 1493. Ostensibly a defensive one for general safety and as such open to any power that chose to join it without impinging on existing treaties; but really against Naples and Florence. Venice, and A.D. 1493.

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, pp. 1-13.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 189.

especially the Doge, from distrust of the pope, had been so shy and lukewarm in this negotiation that neither Florence nor Naples believed it would ever be concluded, wherefore their surprise was excessive when the truth became public, and they instantly engaged Guido Duke of Urbino and the lord of Camerino in their service. The principal cause of all this was Virginio Orsino's obstinacy in despite of all Ferdinand and Piero's remonstrances, whereupon Alexander without more delay began to concentrate his forces about Rome, gave his daughter, misnamed Lucrezia, in marriage to the lord of Pesaro who commanded them, and determined at once to crush Virginio Orsino. Counter-preparations were made at Florence; all the militia were ordered to be in readiness for defence; and Orsino becoming alarmed, offered to leave his cause to the decision of four cardinals; but the pope refused, and Ferdinand brought up his forces towards the Roman frontier *. Meanwhile Lodovico blinded by his fears and doubting the stability of a league the views and interests of whose members were different from his own; alarmed also by his decreasing popularity at Milan where harsh taxation and pity for the state of their young sovereigns had alienated the people; aware moreover that the King of Naples had never renounced his pretensions to Milan. pretensions which Alphonso would be always prompt to assert on the strength of the last Visconte's will in favour of his grandfather †; all these considerations brought him to the fatal resolution of raising a spirit that he could not afterwards control and conjuring up the fiery legions of France to his assistance: but the spell proved far too potent and the audacious wizard sunk under the unmanageable strength of his own dangerous incantations.

The long-cherished pretensions of Anjou to the crown of Naples which had been so baneful to Italy were now concen-

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 190.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°.
† Paulo Giovio., Lib. i°, p. 14.

trated in the throne of France: old Regnier dying without any existing male issue left Provence to his nephew the Duke of Maine who made a will in favour of Louis XI. his rights descending both by this will and as lord paramount to Charles VIII. and thence arose the latter's claims on Naples. It was easy to foresee from the moment that a young ambitious monarch ascended the French throne that such an inheritance would not be allowed to remain in oblivion, and as Charles was now come to that age when monarchs Phaeton-like usually began to amuse themselves by setting the world in flames, France became a sort of Pandora's box, on which the regards of Italy were turned with apprehension; for every sagacious man who loved his country's good saw the necessity of a national defensive alliance against coming aggression. Such a union already existed on paper, as the treaties of Bagnola and Rome were still in being, although not made with this view; but powerless from that never-dying suspicion which has been and will always be the bane of Italy until provincial jealousies have been obliterated by the pressure of one powerful monarchy and the Italians feel themselves once more a single nation: then will be the time to throw off the superincumbent weight and remodel their monarchy, or else become a strong federal republic, but in either case assume their legitimate place in the great European family.

The imbecility of Giovan-Galeazzo Sforza who bore the ducal crown would probably have rendered him contented with its empty honours had not Isabella of Aragon been of a different mould: her complaints as we have before said produced divers remonstrances from Naples and ultimately a formal demand that Giovan-Galeazzo should be put into full possession of his authority. This however was far from Lodovico's intention, wherefore he purchased from the needy emperor Maximilian a formal deed of investiture as Duke of Milan for 400,000 ducats in the form of a dowry with his niece Bianca Maria, whom he

offered to him in marriage. Francesco Sforza had never been formally acknowledged, therefore it was as easily arranged as any other piece of injustice, that Lodovico should have the duchy; but after this security for the inheritance of his own children he remained satisfied with solid power, and keeping the transaction a profound secret allowed his nephew to enjoy the title.

At the moment under consideration he was well aware that any attempt to depose Giovan-Galeazzo would be opposed by Naples without hope on his own part of assistance from the indigent and unsteady emperor: he also began to discover that Alexander VI. was less easily managed than he expected by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza and the Venetians were not to be depended upon, as they had ever been enemies to his family and all the lords of Milan. Piero de' Medici was already alienated; and there was reason to expect that the Milanese citizens themselves would not tamely see their young prince deprived of his birthright. In this state of things Lodovico, following the many examples of his countrymen, sought a foreign protector but under very different circumstances, for the power of France had never before been so formidable nor her monarchs so ambitious of Italian conquest. Charles VIII. had just emerged from the tutelage of his eldest sister to whom the government had been intrusted during his minority by Louis XI. He was wilful, obstinate, light, and impetuous; with little money and less sense, and surrounded by companions as empty as himself instead of the wisdom of his sister Anne and her counsellors: he scarcely knew his letters and was incapable of any application, but eager to command, for which he was utterly unfit, and for military glory, of which a combination of circumstances scattered over him more than he was able to bear *.

To this prince, Lodovico sent Carlo di Barbiano Count of Belgioiso and the Count di Caiazzo son of Roberto di San Seve-

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, pp. 48-87.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 311.

rino to bring about an invasion of Naples; many seductive and authentic stories were told him of the unpopularity of the reigning dynasty, and all the bribery and cunning of diplomacy was put in action, and backed up by the Neapolitan exiles to insure success. The wise and patriotic amongst the great lords were averse to war, and thought the sacrifices necessary to insure the quiet and consent of neighbouring states would more than balance any success: but the young and thoughtless carried everything with a youthful weak-headed prince, so the conquest of Naples was resolved on*. Henry VII. who had just disembarked a formidable army of English was quieted by the treaty of Etaples with a subsidy of 745,000 golden crowns, and the emperor was lulled into repose by the cession of several provinces named in the treaty of Senlis in 1493. Ferdinand the Catholic was propitiated by the gratuitous restitution of Perpignan and other territories which had been held in pawn by Louis XI. and this was settled by the treaty of Barcelona in 1493 †

After these costly preliminaries it was agreed between Charles VIII. and Lodovico that the latter was to give the French army a passage through his territory, reënforce it with five hundred men-at-arms, allow the equipment of what vessels the king pleased at Genoa, and lend him 200,000 ducats on his departure from France. For this Lodovico's personal authority and dominions were to be protected against all enemies and a body of troops left in Asti at his orders, besides a promise of the city and principality of Tarento when Naples should be conquered. These conditions were kept secret for several months and when

* Paulo Giovio and Corio say that the parliament held on this occasion advised the expedition. Guicciardini on the contrary says as above. Philip de Comines is silent, and neither he nor Giovio mention the treaty of Etaples; on the contrary, Giovio says that there were no fears from England because Charles had so recently aided Henry VII. in overcoming Richard III. at Bosworth.—(Vide *P. Giovio*, Lib. i°, pp. 17-22, and (*Corio*, Parte vii., folio 455, who asserts that Anne of Bourbon approved of it.

† Rapin, Hist. d'Angleterre, Vol. iv., Lib. xiv., p. 455.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°, and ii°, cap. i°, p. 34 —Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 191.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. ii. and iii.—Sismondi, vol. viii.

the enterprise became public Lodovico assured the states of Italy that he was as fearful as themselves of the expedition *.

Ferdinand was not idle either in preparations for war or negotiations; he publicly condemned the expedition as rash and ill-advised against a state like Naples which was provided with troops, fortresses, fleets and generals, the heir-apparent being one of the most distinguished of the age; but he was too wise and experienced not to comprehend the full measure of his danger against one of the most warlike and powerful nations of Europe; a nation superior to him in every arm of war; burning with the desire of military glory; and so confident of victory that the chiefs had already parcelled out his whole kingdom amongst them even before the enterprise was completely resolved upon †.

On his own side hatred and suspicion were prevalent; the rule of Aragon was generally disliked and a change greatly desired; the banished lords were powerful, the barons justly exasperated; the first blast of war would sweep off all the revenues; the royal forces had more reputation than real strength; the royal treasury was insufficient to cope simultaneously with foreign invasion and domestic rebellion; the Italian enemies of Ferdinand were many, his friends few and trustless, for his cunning policy or his open hostility had offended all: from Spain he could expect nothing but vaunting promise without performance; and in addition to all this; ancient prophecies were rife about coming destruction; things says Guicciardini, which are unheeded in prosperity and when misfortune approaches too readily believed.

Under such influence his ambassadors at Paris were instructed to offer almost any terms, even to the payment of tribute, to stave off this war; while in Italy he renewed the negotiations for a marriage between Alphonso's daughter

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. i°.

† Guicciardini, Lib. i°, p. 42.—Corio, Stor. Mil., vol. vii., folio 455.

Donna Sancia and Alexander's youngest son Giuffrè Borgia, and urged Orsino, whom he called the author of all this mischief, to come to terms with the pontiff: but above everything he exerted himself to gain over Lodovico even by the sacrifice of Isabella's and Galeazzo's interest and against Alphonso's counsel. The two first were successful; peace was reëstablished between Naples and the pope, who however refused to join in a defensive league; the Milanese and Venetian auxiliary forces were dismissed from the Roman states, and Ferdinand's prospects assumed a more favourable aspect. Nor were his expectations of gaining Lodovico hopeless; for with the most artful reasoning the latter excused his own conduct by the necessity of the case; expressed sorrow and dissatisfaction at the result from its dangerous tendency; declared that the French king's offers were first made to him and that it was impossible to decline them; and he finally promised Ferdinand, Alexander, and Piero de' Medici separately the exertion of all his influence at the court of France to restrain the ardour of its monarch. This was all false: meant only to secure himself from any attack before the arrival of Charles of which he did not yet feel certain; and thus the whole summer was expended in these negotiations which neither assured nor deprived any party of whatever hopes they entertained of his reconciliation *.

Ferdinand tried also to rouse the Venetians to a stronger sense of the impending danger as well as to remove Duke Hercules of Ferrara from his son-in-law Lodovico by poison †; nor were the assurances of support from Spain wanting; but Charles also despatched ambassadors across the Alps under Perron de Baschi who first addressing the Venetians, demanded "their assistance and counsel for his king." These aristocrats

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, p. 42.

† Malipiero asserts that he attempted to poison Hercules by means of his wife who was Ferdinand's own sister; but this being discovered she was poisoned by her husband instead, and his alliance became more close with Lodovico and Charles VIII. in consequence. —(Vide *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. vii., p. 319).

ever cautious in their proceedings, although well pleased to see Naples humbled yet wishing to avoid reproach, and doubtful whether they might not be ultimately abandoned by the French, replied that it would be presumption to advise a monarch surrounded by so many sage counsellors; and that their fears of the Turk, against whom it was Charles's intention finally to move, would prevent their rendering him any assistance*.

Perron, now alone, but subsequently with his three colleagues, Stuart of Aubigny, Briçonnet, and the President of the Parliament of Provence, in a second mission, after finishing his business at Milan, repaired to Florence which republic had already despatched Gentile d' Arezzo and Piero Soderini to France in order to discover Charles's real intentions†.

The demands and the answers at Florence were as civil and as equivocal as at Venice, all parties declining to commit themselves before Charles had crossed the Alps. The Florentine ambassadors in France were however forced to a more explicit answer in favour of Charles by a threat against their commerce which pervaded the whole kingdom and always served as a ready and powerful instrument of evil against Florence in times when the resulting self-injury was not so well understood by France as at present, and which even now requires to be more generally and clearly appreciated amongst nations. Piero vainly attempted to convince Ferdinand that a compliance with the demands of France for a passage through Tuscany and the supply of a hundred Florentine men-at-arms to the royal army as a pledge of his amity, would rather do good than harm to Naples, while it would save Florence from great injury and Piero himself from universal odium. Ferdinand reproached him with wavering, and Piero resolving to stand by him said that he would reply to the propositions of France by another embassy‡.

* Malipiero, Annali Veneti, p. 319.—Mem. Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. v., p. 424.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 192.—Guicciardini, Lib. iº, cap. ii., p. 59.

‡ Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., pp. 191-2.—Guicciardini, Lib. iº, cap. ii., p. 53.

In addition to these difficulties the good understanding between Ferdinand and Alexander began to fail, either from the pope's wish to profit by adding to the difficulties of Ferdinand, or to make him for the sake of preserving it reduce the Cardinal della Rovere (who as Bishop of Ostia held that important fortress) to obedience and compel him to appear in Rome. The king excused himself; complained of Alexander's malevolence and was bitterly and even menacingly answered; so that their late reconciliation was almost shaken to pieces at a moment of the greatest peril for King Ferdinand. This monarch was however spared the misfortunes he anticipated and died as he was going in person to Milan with the most humble proposals in the beginning of 1494. He left a mottled character of good and evil in which the latter far predominated; but also some of the wisest laws and most beneficial institutions of his country *.

In this state of universal agitation the year 1494 commenced and we have endeavoured to exhibit the general occasion of it; but there was an eternal and separate working in Florence that began under Lorenzo and became a powerful instrument in the dispersion of his family, a fermentation in which religion and politics were so curiously blended in its progress and consequences as to form an important and instructive part of the Florentine history. A.D. 1494.

Libertinism, seldom far removed in those days from the chair of Saint Peter, mounted that throne with Sixtus IV. and Innocent VIII. and shone conspicuous with all its vices under the auspices of a Borgia. The high, ecclesiastics of sincere faith and rigid morality, and their more humble followers, could hardly without a shudder behold murder, lasciviousness, adultery, and even incest itself, waving their bloody and immodest arms over the high priest of Christendom and directing the morals

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 194.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. ii., pp. 54-56.—Giannone, Stor. Civile di Napoli, Lib. xxvii., cap. ii., p. 45.

of the world! But the vices of popes were by conscientious persons attributed to the individual, not the system, and their profound reverence was still due to the saintly office and the law, by whomsoever administered: they wished to banish the evil, drive the buyers and sellers from the temple, cleanse the sanctuary, but not destroy the edifice. Before that more intimate mixture of European people which followed the wars of the great transalpine nations in Italy, a veil of mystery and veneration covered the papal throne and preserved the respect of strangers; but in Italy itself, where as a temporal prince the pope was in everlasting contact, and generally collision with his flock, and unscrupulously prostituted the sacred to the profane; there was no mystery. Politics and religion went hand in hand and were almost equally affected by the stormy passions of the day, the latter being made subservient to the former, to priestly vices and cupidity: the self-arrogated authority of heaven was degraded to the service of hell while morals, virtue, religious and social order, were all theoretically understood and all equally despised and corrupted in practice. The object of any reformer who might appear at this epoch must therefore have necessarily been to purify these constituents of society, and in the person of Girolamo Savonarola we find all the enthusiastic boldness of sincerity combined with that powerful eloquence which springs from an over-excited and imaginative mind.

Girolamo Francesco Savonarola was born at Ferrara in 1452, of Michele Savonarola of Padua and Annalena Buonaccorsi of Mantua both of illustrious families. Early distinguished amongst his companions for rapidity of acquirement and particularly for a love of theology, he secretly quitted his family, moved by an imagined vision, and entered with all his natural enthusiasm into a Dominican convent at Bologna where he assumed the habit of that order in 1475 *. His talents soon attracted notice

* Storia di Girolamo F. Savonarola, p. 5.—(Livorno, 1782, 4°).

and in the course of time procured him the place of public lecturer on philosophy; but with a hard yet feeble voice, a disagreeable utterance, and a frame reduced by severe abstinence, he found more admirers of his erudition than his elocution. None then suspected the slumbering powers of an enthusiastic mind for the subjugation of impediments that Nature herself seemed to have planted against him; and those whose senses were afterwards rapt by the regulated cadence of his melodious voice as it rolled through the vaulted aisles of the Florentine cathedral, could scarcely believe him to be the same sickly monk whose vocal infirmities had before paralysed his vast erudition in that very capital. Savonarola himself almost believed the change to be miraculous, and fearful of human pride loved to attribute his success to the immediate inspiration of Heaven as its chosen messenger, the impulse of which inspiration he felt for the first time in 1483. Savonarola fancied himself appointed to preach repentance to every Christian while denouncing the calamities which his own sagacity foresaw were likely to be inflicted on church and state throughout the whole of Italy. After failing at Florence in 1481, this singular man began preaching at Brescia in 1484, especially on the Apocalypse, and prophesied that its streets would be bathed in blood; a prediction supposed to have been accomplished when Gaston de Foix massacred the inhabitants in the year 1500, twenty-four months after Savonarola's death. In 1489 he was invited to Florence by Piero de' Medici at the earnest recommendation of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who had always been his friend, but who was more forcibly impressed with his extraordinary talents and character during some religious disputations at Reggio in 1485 *.

He travelled on foot as a pilgrim with scrip and staff, fell ill on the road from exhaustion, was relieved by a mysterious stranger, who accompanied him to Florence, took his leave at

* Storia di Savonarola, pp. 6, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

the gates, and was never seen afterwards. The monks of San Marco received him with no less joy than wonder at his improvement in learning and eloquence, his tone of voice, and imposing gestures and manner; and from this moment he thundered forth his denunciations of coming woe and worked for eight years successively with the most persuasive eloquence on the excited minds of the Florentines.

From the first he seems to have disliked Lorenzo de' Medici, who nevertheless admired his talents and used every means to propitiate him but in vain: Savonarola was stern, resolved, and dignified; but respectful; he prophesied that great as Lorenzo was and he an humble stranger the former would be compelled to leave his native city before him. Lorenzo at last became irritated at the monk's obstinacy, and authoritatively restrained his too exciting eloquence after vainly endeavouring to put him down by a rival preacher. Savonarola was however unsubdued, and for some time braved all Lorenzo's authority although he afterwards, whether from compulsion or reflection, changed the tone of his discourses to a simple and continued but clear and eloquent exposition of the Old Testament. He saw church discipline corrupted, the shepherds negligent, the shadow of God's wrath overspreading all the land, and he preached repentance and reform; but he never for an instant doubted the tenets of the church itself, or dreamed of submitting them to examination; yet he believed himself inspired, and was in the habit of authoritatively asserting from the pulpit that "God willed thus and thus, and it must be done"*.

Against the abuse of human institutions he brought reason to his aid as well as religion, and fought with a two-edged sword: in all these he would acknowledge no other end than utility to the human species: "the greatest good of the greatest number" was already a maxim of Savonarola's long ere Beccaria reduced it to that verbal form; and a respect for human

* Stor. di Savonarola, pp. 17, 22, 24, 27, 32.—Nerli, Com., Lib. iv., p. 64.

rights was the compass by which he originally steered. Liberty in his mind was only second to religion (if indeed it could ever exist without her) and its destruction by any individual, a crime that placed his salvation in jeopardy: hence his sternness to Lorenzo whom he otherwise admired: hence his constant refusal to visit him or to pay him even the common courtesy due to the patron of his convent: hence his contemptuous reception of every overture; and his fears lest the slightest mark of respect from him might be construed into a recognition of Medician authority. But if the great name and talents of Lorenzo were unable to soften this republican severity there was still less likelihood that Piero's unfledged weakness should remove it; for it was this dangerous liberality of sentiment, this inconvenient philanthropy, combined with Savonarola's popularity and all-exciting eloquence which alarmed Lorenzo and made him check the public expression of an honesty he could never bribe: and though the unbending priest refused to acknowledge his sovereignty he was yet forced to obey him as head of the commonwealth and so abstain from such doctrine as might excite the public passions through his free and powerful eloquence.. The moral effect of his preaching was penetrating; it altered manners, repressed female vanity, restored ill-gotten gains, and introduced such modesty of deportment and dress amongst the women as had never before been witnessed. The political discourses repressed by Lorenzo were resumed under Piero and mainly assisted in shaking his authority; for Savonarola's reasoning was sound, his eloquence persuasive, his prophecies alarming, his boldness imposing; and all these acted like magic on an acute and discontented, but a fearful, excited and superstitious people *.

His visionary enthusiasm, or his clear perception of the hold that he had on the public mind, led him to assert most auda-

* Storia di Savonarola, p. 31, note 3.—Fil. Nerli, Commentarj de' Fatti civil. di Firenze, Lib. iii., p. 58.

ciously from the pulpit that he had been to heaven as ambassador from Florence and that Jesus Christ himself had in consequence assumed the sovereignty of the Florentine republic. "And yet," says Macchiavelli, "this man persuaded the Florentines who were neither dull nor ignorant, that he spoke with God." And then adds: "I will not pretend to judge whether it were true or not, *because of such a man we must speak with reverence;* but I do say that an infinite number believed him without having seen anything extraordinary to make them believe; because his life, his doctrine, the subjects of his discourse were sufficient to inspire faith" *.

Savonarola was undoubtedly an able man; probably a clear-sighted politician as well as an enthusiast, and made this sagacity subservient to his real objects; yet in point of fact but little foresight was required to see the probability of unsettled times; and when after Lorenzo's death he observed a strong disposition to shake off the concentrated power of the Medici he at once took the ball in his own hand, and preached, and reasoned, and threatened; and exposed the designs of those who wished for a restricted government with such vehemence, both publicly and privately, that he gained universal credit and unbounded power †.

No sooner was Ferdinand dead than Alphonso sent an embassy to Rome which, after some double-dealing on Alexander's part in favour of France, concluded a favourable treaty and attached him to the league: nor was he less sedulous in the midst of existing difficulties to continue his father's negotiations with Milan and by sacrificing his daughter's cause to his alarm, bring her back to Naples and owe his safety entirely to Lodovico. The latter went on temporising both with him and Piero de' Medici while he unceasingly urged the French monarch to hasten his preparations: Charles VIII. sent another embassy of the already-named lords to renew his demands of a free pas-

* Segni, Storie Fiorent., Lib. i°, pp. 23-25.—Macchiavelli, Discorsi, cap. xi.
† Fil. Neri, Comment., Lib. iv., p. 65.

sage from Florence and publish his reasons for invading the kingdom of Naples. They then proceeded to Rome; but neither public threats nor private promises to Piero, could induce him to abandon Alphonso, although against the hereditary policy of his family, and contrary to the wishes and opinions of the people whose numerous commercial relations with every part of France were a strong bond of union. Neither were the ambassadors more successful with Alexander who had now taken a decided part in favour of Naples and resolved to abide by it, as long as it suited his interests *.

The result of all we have endeavoured to explain amounts to this: that after Lorenzo's death Florence swerved from Milan, unsettled the political balance, and leaned to Naples: that Milan being alarmed, united with the pope and Venice in a league against them, all three wishing, for different reasons, to see Naples humbled. That Lodovico suspicious of his allies and doubting his own safety, invited Charles VIII. to assert his claims on Naples, invade Italy, give his protection to Milan, and receive her assistance in return; that Alexander after intriguing with both sides ultimately held to Alphonso†; that Venice, not indisposed to let all parties be weakened, remained ostensibly neutral; and that Piero de' Medici still clinging to Naples drew down on his country the indignation of France by pertinaciously refusing a passage that her monarch was able and determined to effect. We will now proceed to the more stirring events of the war‡.

Alphonso made his preparations for the defence of Italy in such a way that all the peninsula to the northern confines of

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. ii°, pp. 55 to 63.

† Domenico Malipiero in his "*Annali Veneti*" (p. 318, vol. vii., *Archivio Storico Italiano*) says that Ascanio Sforza persuaded the pope to invest Lodovico with the lordship of Bologna on condition of expelling the Bentivogli and the payment of 70,000 ducats and 10,000 more annually as tribute to the church. This does not appear to be noticed by other historians.

‡ Franc°. Cei, Mem. Storiche, p. 46, MS. in the author's possession.

Tuscany, Bologna, and the petty states of Romagna were united, and Lucca and Siena disposed to join. The principal army was sent into Romagna under Ferdinand Duke of Calabria with the hopes of raising a revolt in Lombardy: Alphonso's brother, Prince Frederic, commanded the fleet which was stationed at the port of Pisa to watch the enemy's movements at Genoa while the king remained within his own frontier and Virginio Orsino with a strong force held the Colonnain check about Rome.

The Ecclesiastical states and Neapolitan frontier were further protected by another army in the Abruzzi, and Cardinal Paulo Fregoso Archbishop, and formerly Doge of Genoa, offered in a council of the allies at Vicovaro near Tivoli to raise a rebellion in his native city and expel the Milanese and Adorni, if he could only manage to reach it with the Neapolitan squadron before the French arrived. The proposal was accepted and he sailed for Genoa; but all his intrigues had already been discovered by the restless spirit of Giuliano della Rovere: that prelate leaving Ostia well garrisoned under his brother, made the best of his way to France and finding the king at Lyon succeeded in fixing the unsteady mind of this weak prince who after all his sacrifices was principally through the influence of his sister about to give up the expedition. Mainly by Giuliano's exertions some reënforcements were despatched to Genoa and Don Frederic was defeated at Porto Venere; the Genoese insurgents and three thousand infantry under Ibletto de' Fieschi were destroyed at Rapalla by a French and Milanese division, and the whole enterprise failed *.

Meanwhile great preparations were making at Genoa under the direction of his grand equerry Pierre d' Urfè for the French monarch's reception; a fleet commanded by the Duke of Orleans was rapidly equipped consisting of twelve great transports capable of containing fifteen hundred horse, ninety-six of

* Malipiero, Annali Veneti, p. 318.—Phil. de Comines, cap. iv. v.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. ii°, p. 67.—Paulo Giovio, Lib. i°, pp. 31-35.

smaller size for infantry; seventeen "*Speronate*"*, twenty-three vessels of five hundred and sixty, and twenty-six of five hundred and eighty tons; one great galeas or double galley that carried a hundred horses; thirty armed war galleys, and finally the royal galley with a gilded poop and a silken awning extending from stem to stern. These were merely intended as auxiliary to the French squadron and the whole number of horses embarked was under eighteen hundred; but Charles with his usual wavering, "not being provided," says Philip de Comines, "with great sense or much money, nor with anything necessary for such an enterprise," changed his mind and crossed the Alps by the pass of Mont Genèvre in August 1494 with an army amounting after the junction of Lodovico Sforza to sixty thousand men of all arms and conditions including followers†.

The Duke of Savoy and the Marquis of Monteferrato were both minors under the care of their respective mothers, who fearful of the storm and perhaps not unfriendly to Charles opened all the passes and cities of their territories: the duchess met him at Turin, the marchioness at Casale; he borrowed the jewels of both; pledged them for 24,000 ducats; and then took his leave of the two female regents of Savoy and Monteferrato‡! At Asti, which belonged to the Duke of Orleans in right of his mother Valentina Visconte, Charles was joined by Lodovico with his wife Beatrice of Este and her father Hercules Duke of Ferrara besides a selection of the most beautiful women of Milan, who it is said were more celebrated for their fascination than their severity, and by whose aid Lodovico hoped to influence the young and voluptuous monarch. The king however fell ill of some disease resembling the smallpox, and the Italians it is said were indebted to this army for the

* A sort of light galley or despatch-boat; *now* pulling about twenty oars, and used in the latter character alone.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 28.—Phil. de Comines, cap. iv., p. 425—Giustiniani, An. de Genoa, Lib. v., Carta ccxlix.—Interiano, Lib. viii., p. 228.—Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 336.

‡ Phil. de Comines, cap. v.

introduction of another illness before unknown in their country. At Pavia Charles visited the unfortunate Giovan-Galeazzo and his unhappy duchess: the former was fast sinking, as was believed, by slow poison; the latter even in Lodovico's presence for no private interview was allowed, implored the king on her knees to spare Alphonso and her brother Ferdinand; he was moved but had gone too far to change, and breaking away from so painful a scene forgot his unhappy cousin and continued his march to Placentia *.

While at Placentia Lodovico heard of his nephew's death on the twentieth of October, and immediately returned to Milan: the young duke left two children, a son and daughter, the former but five years of age; this minority was a good excuse for usurpation, wherefore Lodovico by the senate's advice availed himself of his secret investiture by Maximilian and thereupon was proclaimed Duke of Milan. He immediately after rejoined the king, giving rise to great suspicion disgust and detestation amongst the Frenchmen, and with the general reputation of having poisoned his unfortunate kinsman †.

There were those however who attributed the young duke's death to immoderate sensual indulgence but the general belief was poison, and at the French court people expressed their opinion openly that this deed had been long premeditated and that the real cause of his inviting Charles VIII. into Italy was to prevent all opposition by his presence ‡.

The French army was now ready to march through Tuscany: it consisted of three thousand six hundred men-at-arms; six thousand foot-archers from Bretagne; six thousand cross-bowmen from the central provinces; eight thousand Gascon infantry at that time the most esteemed in France; all armed with arquebuses and two-handed swords; and eight thou-

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iii., pp. 90, 98. — Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. vi.

† Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. vi. —Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iii°, p. 99. —Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 19.

‡ Ibid., p. 100.

sand Swiss or German pikemen and halberdiers. An immense number of attendants followed and increased this splendid force which was led by the king, the Duke of Orleans, afterwards Louis XII. the Duke of Vendôme; the Count of Montpensier; Louis de Ligne Lord of Luxembourg; Louis de la Trémoüille and other great seigniors, besides the Seneschal of Beaucaire; Briçonnet Bishop of Saint Malo both confidential advisers of Charles, and though last not least, his father's old and faithful counsellor Philip de Comines Lôrd of Argenton who has left so interesting and instructive a history of his own times to posterity *. The French man-at-arms or lance (a name which seems to have been gradually dropped in Italy after the cessation of transalpine condottieri by whom it was introduced) consisted of six horsemen, of which two were archers: they were nearly all French subjects, and all gentlemen, who were neither enrolled nor removed at the general's pleasure nor paid by him as in Italy, but received their salary direct from the crown: their squadrons were always maintained complete and every man was well equipped both with arms and horses; for their circumstances were equal to it; and there was a good spirit and an honourable emulation to distinguish themselves not only for the sake of glory but promotion, and the same spirit existed amongst the leaders and generals, who were all lords and barons or of illustrious family and nearly all native Frenchmen. None of the subordinate chiefs commanded more than a hundred lances and when these were complete, they looked only to glory and promotion which were pursued with a singular devotion to the king whom they considered the source of both. The result of this spirit and this equality, was a steadiness in their service, an absence of any desire, whether from avarice or ambition, to change their masters, and a similar absence of any rivalry with other captains for a larger command.

All this differed from the Italian army in which the men-at-

* Mem. de Louis de la Tremouille, cited by Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 344.

arms were at this time principally composed of the lower ranks of society, of strangers from other states, the subjects of other princes; all depending on the condottieri, with whom they agreed for their salary and by them alone was it paid, yet without any generous stimulus to honour, glory, or good service; but on the contrary the certainty of an unfeeling dismissal when no longer wanted. The generals themselves were rarely the subjects of those they served and frequently had different ends and interests, which were sometimes even directly inimical. Amongst each other there was abundance of hatred and rivalry and consequent absence of discipline: nor had they always a prefixed period of service; wherefore being entire masters of their troops they left their numbers incomplete, though paid for; defrauded their employers; demanded shameful contributions from them in emergencies, and then tired of the service, or stimulated by ambition or avarice or some other temptation they were not only fickle but unfaithful. Nor was there less difference in the infantry of France and Italy: the latter fought in compact and well-ordered battalions, but scattered over the country and taking advantage of its banks and ditches and all its local peculiarities: the Swiss in French pay on the contrary combated in large masses of an invariable number of rank and file, and never breaking this order they presented themselves like a strong, solid, and almost unconquerable wall where there was sufficient space to deploy their battalions: with similar discipline and similar order did the French and Gascon infantry fight, but not with equal bravery. In their ordnance however the French were far superior to the Italians and sent so great a quantity both of battering and field artillery to Genoa for this war, and of so superior a nature, that the Italian officers were astonished. Hitherto in Italy this warlike arm whether used in the field or fortress had been of a very cumbrous construction; the largest were denominated "*Bombarde*" and were made both of brass and iron, but of great size: difficult of transport;

difficult to place; and difficult to discharge: much time was consumed in loading; a long interval passed between every round; and the effect in general was comparatively trifling with reference to the time and labour employed, there being always a sufficient interval between each discharge for the garrison to repair the damage at their leisure. The French had already cast much lighter pieces of brass ordnance to which they seem to be the first who gave the name of cannon, and used iron shot instead of stone balls: these were placed on lighter carriages, and instead of bullocks as in Italy, they were drawn by horses and kept pace with the army. They were placed in battery with a rapidity that astonished the Italians, and their fire was so quick and well-directed that what had previously been many days' work amongst the latter was accomplished in a few hours by the Frenchmen; so that this alone made their army formidable to all Italy independent of their native ferocity and valour*.

With such soldiers Charles VIII. entered Tuscany by Pontremoli which then belonged to Milan, and descending the left bank of the Magra, took Fivizzano, as the first of his Florentine acquisitions, put the whole garrison and a great part of the inhabitants to death, and spread terror through a land unused to bloody wars and indiscriminate massacre: from Fivizzano the invaders resumed their march and unwilling to leave such a place as Sarzana in their rear invested that town with all the army which was now augmented by the Swiss auxiliaries and the artillery from Genoa. Sarzana was strong, Sarzanella situated on the hill above, infinitely stronger; but neither properly prepared for a siege, and alarmed even at the very name of a French army. Yet the enterprise was difficult; the country was sterile, confined, and unhealthy, and provisions scarce; much therefore might have been done by a strong opposition here; or if the king left the siege to advance on Pisa or enter the states of Lucca, (which through Lodovico's intrigues now secretly favoured him)

* Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, Lib. i°, cap. iii°, p. 91.

or to advance direct on Florence, the failure of his attempt would have had a bad moral influence and encouraged further resistance *. The Duke of Calabria had in the meantime occupied Romagna but with an inadequate force, and being young, commanded under the advice of Orsino Count of Pitigliano and Giovanni Jacomo Trivulzio; the former cautious to a fault the latter fiery and impetuous. The result was ill success and a rapid retreat before Stuart Duke of Lennox and Aubigny, and the subsequent secession of Caterina Sforza from the league †. All this ill-luck began to damp the courage of Piero de' Medici, and the terror of his fellow-citizens redoubled public indignation against him: the French monarch had compelled his banking establishment at Lyon to break up, but left all other Florentines unmolested, in order to show the world against whom his anger was directed. This circumstance combined with their terror at the approaching danger drew the citizens into closer union against Piero, who was accused of exciting a war for another's quarrel with a nation to whom they had ever been warmly attached. Murmurs increased; Lorenzo and Giovanni de' Medici had already taken refuge at the French court and were urging Charles to overturn a system of government that had become odious to the majority of Florentines: there was no sympathy with Piero, even amongst the populace; his father's friends who from self-interestedness were now estranged from him, had been long courting the inferior citizens in the fear and expectation of a change; and he, alarmed at the unwonted signs of trouble, sunk where a man of genius would have risen, and burst like the frog in the fable with his mistaken efforts to imitate a greater man ‡.

Lorenzo in his extremity did, with much precaution, the boldest and wisest act that circumstances allowed; but these were as different as the two men, and the result was accordingly: after much secret preparation and extreme prudence

* Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, Lib. i°, cap. iii., p. 102.
† Ibid., p. 108. ‡ Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 27.

Lorenzo with difficulty succeeded, and Piero had been accustomed to hear his father's conduct lauded to the skies: prompted by his own folly he inconsiderately determined to imitate him; wherefore appointing an embassy he resolved to proceed at its head to the French court and endeavour to negotiate. So far was politic, an overwhelming force was on the frontier; little hope of effectual resistance remained; the city was discontented; his own authority was tottering; he could not fight, and therefore he did right to treat. But after some secret agreement with French agents he abruptly quitted his colleagues on the pretence of first visiting Pisa and hastened on to the royal camp in the hope of conducting the negotiation more unreservedly and with greater attention to private than public interests than he could possibly do with a set of jealous discontented companions. At Pietra Santa he stopped for his passport, (or safe-conduct as it was then called) having heard that three hundred horse who attempted to reënforce Sarzana had been cut to pieces: proceeding to the royal camp he was received with apparent graciousness; and further to propitiate Charles he immediately and almost voluntarily ordered Sarzana, which could have made a good defence, to be surrendered and Sarzanello to follow its example. The French monarch astonished and delighted at this easy acquisition of two strong fortresses commanding the entrance into Tuscany, boldly increased his demands and was still further surprised by having Pietra Santa, Leghorn, Librafatta, and even Pisa placed in his hands with no other security than the king's note of hand, or mere verbal promise of restoring them after the conquest of Naples should be achieved. When the rest of the ambassadors arrived they were astounded at Piero's folly, their utmost intention having been to concede what they could no longer refuse; a free passage through the Florentine territory. When in addition to this it was known that Piero had engaged the republic to lend 200,000 florins for which the king

was to take them under his protection but only on the security of his simple word until he arrived at Florence, public rage and astonishment became unbounded, and a reception was prepared for the Medici that he little expected. They saw their dominions laid open to the mercy of an exasperated foe; their strongholds surrendered without conditions or security, and the very forms of republican liberty most insolently trampled upon by one whose arrogance had already disgusted them and whom they were previously determined to pull down; but having no power to defend Pisa and Leghorn they still hoped to save them by denying Piero's authority to make any such concessions*.

To disavow his acts they at once despatched another embassy, composed of those most adverse to Medician power, and led by Girolamo Savonarola: it found Charles at Lucca but was unable to obtain an audience until the next day at Pisa where the discourse of Savonarola made some impression and would probably have been more efficacious had not the influence of "*Le grand Lombard*" as the French called Piero, been still most mischievously paramount†.

On the intelligence of these events reaching the Duke of Calabria in Romagna, and Don Frederic who still commanded the fleet, the latter instantly retired from Porto Pisano and Leghorn, and the former being deprived of Florentine aid quitted Imola and Forlì, resolved to defend Naples on her own soil as he could not maintain himself in a stranger's‡. Lodovico

* Phil. de Comines, cap. vii.—Paulo Giovio, Lib. i°, p. 41.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iii., p. 104.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 15—18.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 203.—All these facts are also corroborated by three old MSS. in my possession, viz.: "*Francesco Cei, Memorie Storiche, dal* 1494 *al* 1523." "*Relazione della Espulsione di Piero de' Medici e di altre novità seguite in Firenze nel* 1494." "*Memorie delle mutazioni e ordinazioni seguite nel governo di Firenze dopo l' espulsione di Piero Medici.*" These are written by Guido Giovanni di Zanobi Guidacci (date 1649) or rather copied from a more ancient and apparently a cotemporary MS.

† Guicciardini, Lib. i°, p. 110.—Storia di Savonarola, p. 68.—Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 18.

‡ Ibid., p. 20.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 203.

at this time although he received the investiture of Genoa from the king for himself and his descendants, left the French camp and returned to Milan, sulky with Charles because Pietra Santa and Sarzana were not also according to promise, placed in his custody as Genoese possessions, but which he really coveted as weapons for the future conquest of Pisa*.

Piero seeing in the anger of Florence a determination to throw off his yoke, instantly ordered his cousin Paulo Orsino then in Florentine pay to assemble troops and be ready for action, and Paulo accordingly occupied a position at Sant' Antonio del Vescovo near the city. Piero then returned to Florence making his entry on the eighth of November 1494 and went straight to the palace determined to establish his power by force of arms and send all his enemies to death or banishment, but he was unequal to the task†. Citizens had grown up in Florence of a bolder cast; men who from early habits, and respect for the great abilities of Lorenzo had been content to serve, but scorned the puerile insolence and feebleness of his son's character; a character made still more obnoxious by his trampling on those forms of liberty which so many of the citizens still clung to even while they felt their emptiness. At the head of these was Piero di Gino di Neri Capponi, who with all the integrity, the courage, and the talent of his family, urged upon his fellow citizens the necessity of immediate and vigorous action; a prompt assertion of public liberty against the designs of Piero de' Medici in the first instance; and an unanimous effort for the national independence against foreign invasion in the second. Capponi was supported by Luca di Bertoldo Corsini and Jacopo di Tanai de' Nerli, both openly declaring that then was the moment to rid themselves of child's government. A Seignory, all but one inimical to Piero, was accordingly chosen

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iii., p. 110.—Phil. de Comines, cap. vii.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 20.

through this influence on the first of November 1494 by a large meeting of citizens in conjunction with the "Otto di Pratica," and under Giovanni Francesco Scarfi as gonfalonier of justice*.

To the bold attempt of making himself absolute prince of Florence in existing circumstances, it is said that Piero was persuaded by his wife Alfonsina and other relations of the Orsini race; but however that may be, on Sunday the ninth of November he went direct to the palace, which was closed, and was informed of the Seignory's command that he alone should be admitted, and only through the wicket†. Piero withdrew much disconcerted, but after retiring a few paces he was recalled by a messenger from Antonio Lorini who that day happened to be "*Preposto*" or President of the Seignory and still in some degree attached to the Medici. Lorini would therefore allow no proposition to be made in that council against Piero, nor even permit a general meeting of the citizens by sounding the great bell of the palace; he would even have at once admitted Piero had not Luca Corsini, Jacopo Nerli, and others hurried to the gate and refused him an entrance with high words and personal insult‡. The people present seeing him thus contemptuously driven from the gate shouted in derision as he passed, nay the very children took up this hue and cry and even pelted him, so that Piero although naturally courageous and in the midst of his armed attendants, was overcome with

* They were Luca Corsini, Giovanni Uguccione, Francesco Niccolini, Filippo Sacchetti, Giuliano Lenzone, Chimenti Sciarpellone, Antonio Lorini and Francesco Taddei—with the above-named gonfalonier of justice. — Francesco Cei, Mem. Stor., p. 13, MS.

† Vita di Savonarola, cap. vi., p. 61.

‡ Nerli spit in his face (Vita di Savonarola, cap. vi., p. 21, Genevra, 1781). The MS. history of Francesco Cei says that Piero *was* admitted with a few attendants on his *first* application; that he excused himself before the Seignory; was admonished and ordered to send Paulo Orsino away, and desist from every act that might give rise to suspicions against him—(p. 15.) and that the above insults happened at his second visit on the 9th November.—Jacopo Pitti's account agrees with this but makes out three visits to the palace and two admissions there by the Seignory.—(Lib. i°, p. 31.)

fear: the Bargello Pier Antonio dall' Aquila, who came with a guard to his assistance was at once disarmed and rifled, and then conducted quietly back to his residence. Piero soon reached the Medici palace in Via Larga while the Bargello was compelled to release his prisoners, and these with the arms of his guard were the first men and the first weapons used to overthrow a tyranny of sixty years' duration*.

These unequivocal signs of public feeling encouraged the Seignory, who hearing that Piero had denounced them and being fearful of Orsino's troops, immediately tolled the campana: this soon brought the citizens together with such old-fashioned weapons as they could lay their hands upon; for in those days few were allowed to carry arms, and only in the houses of the Medician party could any be found, so jealous was their rule †! On reaching home Piero lost no time in summoning Paulo Orsino to his aid while Cardinal Giovanni issued out at the head of his followers, making way towards the palace with the Medician cry of "*Palle Palle*;" until it was overcome by the now more formidable shouts of "*Popolo, Popolo; Libertà, Libertà*," and the cardinal's progress was arrested at Orto-San-Michele. This increased Piero's alarm who hastily fled towards Porta Sangallo endeavouring to raise that quarter in his favour by flinging money amongst the people and using every other means that he and his brother Giuliano could command. But the population of Sangallo; of yore devoted to his house; were now insensible to everything but the sullen sound of the campana then rolling over their heads the parting knell of the Medici: Piero listened to it and fled, and like a startled deer rushed through the city gates which then closed and shut him out for ever ‡.

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 20.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv., p. 111.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 204.—Fran. Cei, p. 16, MS.—Gio. Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero di Medici, MS.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. viii.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 21.

‡ Fran. Cei, MS., p. 16.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 22.—Vita di Savonarola, cap. vi., p. 22.

The Cardinal de' Medici who had stopped at the Cantone del Giglio; sending his majordomo on to Orsanmichele where he was left for dead; on learning that the Seignory had declared him a rebel disguised himself as a monk and along with Giuliano followed the steps of his elder brother *. The latter fled in the first instance to Careggi and then towards Bologna; but his companions became terrified and after a few miles Piero was nearly deserted: even Orsini on seeing the troops disperse, consulted his own safety and perhaps his friend's, by taking a different route leaving Piero to arrive almost unattended at Bologna †. He was there somewhat coolly received by Giovanni Bentivoglio and sarcastically asked who had driven him from Florence? "If you should ever by chance hear," added the vain Lord of Bologna, "If you should by chance hear that I were driven from this city believe it not, rather believe that I am cut to pieces." His time however came and like Piero he died in exile, for no man is master of his destiny: it is easier to vaunt and blame than set a heroic example or judge of the moment when such an example may be necessary: the living though beaten head of an able chieftain is worth many self-immolated heroes, and more courage is necessary to stem the dark current of living troubles than to meet a glorious death in honourable combat.

It was however believed by many that if Piero had made a stand at his own palace with Orsini's troops and his family adherents none would have dared to attack him, and his cause would have prospered: and when we consider that only his former partisans had arms, and that these from early habits of deference and perhaps some lingering sentiments of respect for the race which had so long protected them, would have been languid in their use such a conjecture is not improbable. It was one of

* Vita di Savonarola, cap. vi., p. 22.—Fran. Cei, MS., Mem. Storiche, p. 16.

† Nardi, Lib. i., p. 22.—He however reached Venice with fourteen followers including Giuliano and the Cardinal on 14th November (*Malipiero, Annali Veneti*, vol. vii., p. 324, *Archivio Storico Italiano.*)

those decisive moments when a great mind leaves common rules and wins by the intuitive perception of superior genius*.

Once up and excited the Florentines as usual broke into excesses: the dwellings of many persons, the reputed authors of a grinding taxation, were instantly plundered: the Medician gardens at San Marco where Buonaroti's genius first attracted the notice of Lorenzo, next fell under their fury; and Cardinal Giovanni's house at Saint Antonio with many other palaces would have suffered if the Seignory had not taken immediate measures to stop the tumult: this saved the splendid residence of the Medici (now Riccardi) in Via Larga, only however to be afterwards sold by order of government or sacked by the King of France's followers who subsequently lodged there and helped to disperse or destroy the magnificent collection of books, manuscripts and works of art that the Medici had been collecting for three generations †.

On the same day all the effigies of those who had been declared rebels by that family in 1434 were swept from the walls of the podestà's palace as well as those painted over the doors of the custom-house in 1478; the families of Neroni Dietisalvi, the Pazzi, and all other enemies of the Medici were restored, amongst them Lorenzo and Giovanni de' Medici, who immediately renounced their family name and arms, for those of "*Popolani*," with the device of the Florentine people (a red cross in a white field) conferred on them by public decree ‡.

So ended for a season the Medician rule in Florence after sixty years' duration, but only to be revived with greater vigour, greater tyranny, and more fatal permanence: for two-and-fifty years before had the exclusively Guelphic sway of the Albizzi endured, and thus two private families domineered over the Florentine republic for the long period of a hundred and twelve years: the Albizzi ruled with some consideration

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 22.—Espulsione de Piero di Medici, MS. p. 10.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 22.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. ix.—Paulo Giovio, Lib. i°, p. 43.

‡ Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 22.

for public liberty in all that did not directly affect their political power, and certainly with less vindictiveness than the Medici; the latter with an incipient moderation that gradually swelled into a total contempt even of the meagre forms of liberty. The ambition of the first was to be chiefs of a republican community, to direct the energies of a free people, but not reduce them to servitude: they were a faction, but one of great vigour, great ability, and some real patriotism. The desire of the last was to become sovereign princes of Florence and, for self-aggrandisement, the destroyers of its political liberty: the one marched boldly and openly to their object strong in talent and general influence: the other more covertly; and with equal talent and greater sagacity gained theirs by a gentle sapping of the very foundations of independence. Both became too much elated with a long and successful rule, too confident in its stability, and therefore too careless in its management; until at last, forgetting that they were citizens, they attempted more and lost their venture: the Albizzi more rapidly because they had a powerful rival watching for every chance and improving every error to his own advantage; but the Medici wise from their own success, cut down the tallest poppies in the field and stood alone above the bending multitude. They were both expelled; but rather from too openly exhibiting their power than from its actual possession: the tiger's paw may be laid on as soft as velvet but if he unsheath his claws he scares; so if the curb and rein be set in silk and gold a nation may go on quietly champing the bit, and ruminating upon its freedom until a sudden jerk of the bridle proclaim the danger.

The rapid changes of Florentine character from subservience to cruelty were perhaps never more apparent than in the immediate offer of 2000 crowns of gold to any who would bring the head of either of the two elder Medici to Florence, and 5000 if delivered up alive. This, it is true, was the custom of the age and in accordance with Florentine law; but there was,

even for that time and country, something diabolical in tempting every villain in every state to murder these youthful fugitives, against one of whom at least little or nothing could be alleged beyond the momentary effort to preserve his brother's authority *. Nevertheless some allowance must be made for the personal hatred that was borne, and justly borne to Piero de' Medici whose father even had always been fearful of his ruining the family, and in all the writers of that day there are strong indications of his more than common depravity. Cambi declares him to have been "*stained with every vice*" for which reason he adds, "It is to be hoped by the grace of God that the city will soon get rid of tyrants; for the citizens now see their error." Francesco Cei calls him a proud, vicious, cruel, and licentious man who was more hated than feared; and Giovanni Guidacci in his relation of Piero's expulsion writes as follows †. "Florence remained free (from him) by the grâce of God and not by human wisdom, as they know and saw who were present at this great event; because the fear with which God filled Piero's heart and those of his confederates did much more than arms and forces. He had assumed the power of ruling the people as he listed, and nominated the Seignory and all the magistracies, such as the '*Otto di Balìa*,' the '*Ufizio del Monte*,' the '*Conservators of the Laws*,' and other important magistrates entirely at his will, so that he held the government completely in hand. And by little and little his father Lorenzo and his (Lorenzo's) mother Lucrezia in their lifetime had so reduced the state of Florence that every petty office was given away by them or through their means; and even every domestic servant who wished to serve as an attendant in the offices of the various trade corporations was forced to apply to Madam Lucrezia. The very citizens about to enter office,

* Istorie di Giov. Cambi, p. 79.—Guicciardini (cap. iv.) says that Giuliano was declared a rebel like the others but Cambi only mentions the two elder brothers.

† Gio. Cambi, p. 68.—F. Cei, Mem., MS. p. 6.

before they received it were compelled to visit Lorenzo and obtain his approbation; and thus the way to every post was commanded; and in the same manner was this continued by Piero, and even exceeded; for of the revenues of the city of Florence, all, or nearly all were paid into the bank of the Medici; and almost all the public treasurers were nominated by Piero from the clerks of his own bank. The soldiers' pay also was disbursed by this bank, and all moneys payable by the officers of war or the 'Dieci di Balià' were paid through the same channel; and thus each office and every branch of revenue, or the major part of them, came into the hands of Piero; and no man was bold enough to raise his voice against it; and so he managed his friends by love and his enemies by force. The greater part of the marriages contracted in Florence during his time were made according to his fancy, and husbands and wives arbitrarily given away by himself and friends; and if his rule had lasted he would shortly have been lord of Florence.

"But because he was devoid of talent and every sort of goodness, yet full of libidinousness and immodesty towards the Florentine youth of both sexes whether belonging to friends or enemies, if the fancy came or that he was peradventure taken with any, he did his utmost to gratify his desire and had many ways of accomplishing it. Wherefore God, seeing and knowing him to be a young man without fear of heaven and reckless of his neighbour's honour, would not allow him to proceed and so withdrew his hand, and thus losing his intellect Piero was driven from Florence" *.

On the self-same day that Florence recovered her liberty

* Guidacci, "Espulsione di Piero de' Medici, p. 6, MS.—It is in this sense that Dante uses the same expression (Inferno, Canto iii.) "Che vedrai le genti dolorose, che hanno *perduto il ben dell' intelletto*."—It seems very doubtful however whether Piero was so devoid of talent as this author describes him.—See his letter to Dionigi Pucci, Documento 2 and note by Gino Capponi, vol. i., Ar. Stor. Ital.

Pisa demanded the restoration of hers; and Charles VIII. as Comines says *not exactly understanding what liberty meant*, granted their boon: the Pisans he adds might well be excused for wishing to throw off the Florentine yoke for though the inconstant Italians were always eager to please the most powerful, Pisa was ruled with extreme rigour by Florence and the citizens treated with a degree of cruelty only practised upon slaves *. More than eighty-eight years had elapsed since Pisa was conquered and the early government of Florence had been comparatively mild: Gino Capponi as we have seen endeavoured to conciliate them by his justice and moderation and this is said to have been continued under the Albizzi, but as that city is scarcely mentioned from the moment of its fall until its revolt under Charles VIII. it is hard to tell when and how the change began though an early specimen of the spirit of Florentine rule has been already given †. It is also asserted that when Florentine liberty declined under Cosimo a system of illiberality and persecution gradually poisoned the better feelings of an independent people and a suspicious jealousy overcame humanity, justice, and sound policy. Pistoia it was said had been reduced to subjection by alternately favouring its factions, and Pisa was to be held in bondage by its citadels ‡.

Two of these were erected there, and under their shadow cruelty and injustice revelled unquestioned and unchecked: oppression, private exaction, public imposts, official tyranny, exclusion from office, insolence, contempt, everlasting suspicion; hostages exacted on every trifling accident; prohibition from wholesale commerce, from the manufactures of silk and wool, and other injustice, all served to maintain the ancient and everlasting spirit of hatred to the Florentines, a hatred that has not even now completely subsided in Pisa §. Nay it is confidently asserted that the very drains and canals of the

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. vii.
† See note to chap. xxix., p. 23, Book i.
‡ Sismondi, vol. viii., p. 359.—Machiavelli, Discorsi, Lib. ii°, cap. xxiv., xxv.
§ Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv., p. 113.

marshy delta of the Arno were purposely neglected to spoil their agriculture and thus introduce disease and misery in their most deadly forms for the purpose of more quickly breaking the spirit of this proud indignant people, and taming them to the yoke of Florence *. The profound silence of the Florentine writers about Pisa while under their sway, the sullen taciturnity of the Pisans themselves; who, thus caged, refused to sing their own misfortunes; and the unmitigated bitterness of feeling on both sides, render it almost impossible to judge of the exact nature extent and motives of Florentine oppression; and the evident impolicy of depopulating a country by the introduction of sickness and the ruin of agriculture would be monstrous if we had not the every-day experience of what "fantastic tricks man plays when dressed in a little brief authority," and how governments mistake their own interests when blinded by passion fanaticism and national prejudice †.

Like Ireland in our own times, Pisa was then to be held only by frowns and coercion: hence citadels were built; and though her commerce and manufactures might have interfered with Florence, her agriculture could not, except beneficially; and the ruin of her drainage is of so barbarous and suicidal a character that culpable negligence rather than malicious intention might be inferred if it were not for the letter quoted above, more especially as an office of canals and drains was established in 1477, perhaps to remedy the self-created misfortune. "Pisa," says Macchiavelli, "should have participated in all the rights and privileges of Florence and thus have been attached by companionship, or else after the Roman fashion its walls should have been destroyed; but it never should have been coerced by citadels, which are useless in the occupation of a conquered town and injurious to a native one" ‡. But neither fortress nor oppression could extinguish the hatred nor

* Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. i°, p. 149.
† See note in last page and Fabroni, vol. ii°, p. 8, 4to edition.
‡ Macchiavelli de' Discorsi, Lib. ii°, cap. 24.

break the spirit of Pisa; with marvellous elasticity her citizens shook off their burden at the king's approach, and buoyed by the hollow counsel of the Moor who wished to add her to his state, resolved to make one bold effort for liberty. Amongst all the Pisan citizens Simone Orlandi was most noted for his detestation of Florence, and his house became the rendezvous for all the disaffected spirits: he was bold, eloquent, and sincere, and speaking the French language as fluently as Italian they selected him for their advocate: Charles occupied the palace of the Medici, and there Orlandi presented himself accompanied by a concourse of his compatriots of both sexes: the king issued out on his way to mass and was loudly hailed with the cry of *Libertà, Libertà*, the whole assembly entreating him with streaming eyes to grant it. An advocate of the court whose office was to receive petitions, either bribed by the supplicants or not well understanding the Italian language; for in the account of this transaction Comines and Giovio vary; assured Charles that their case was pitiable and their prayer well worthy of being granted, for no people had been so infamously treated as the Pisans. The king as we have said not well comprehending the exact meaning of the word *Libertà*, a thing which he could not justly give them because the city did not belong to him, nevertheless signified his most gracious assent, which was received with shouts of joy by the multitude. "*France*" and "*Liberty*" resounded through the streets; the Florentine officers were expelled even against the king's intentions; the "*Marzocchi*" or Stone Lions, the emblem of Florentine rule, were dashed into fragments, a statue of Charles himself trampling them under his horse's feet was raised on their ruins, and Pisa once more respired the air of freedom in the self-same hour that her oppressors drove their own tyrant from the walls of Florence *.

* Guicciardini, Lib. iº, cap. iv, p. 113. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. vii.—Memoriale di Giovan. Portovenere, vol. vi. —Paulo Giovio, Lib. iº, p. 45.—Phil.

The Florentines fearing that Charles would attempt to restore Piero de' Medici, made a merit of necessity and not only surrendered the citadel and fortress of Pisa but also delivered Porto Pisano into his hands, which never would have been done but from the fear of refusing what he had so treacherously promised *. The old citadel was immediately given up to the Pisans; the new and more important one received a strong French garrison, and then the king with a haughty and threatening aspect pursued his march to Florence. At the Villa Pandolfini near Signa, within eight miles of that capital, the French army halted in order to afford time for Stuart of Aubigny to rejoin the king with all but his Italian auxiliaries and so give more weight to the terms which he now meant to impose on the Florentines. Here several embassies were received, nor did he hide his intention of compelling them by the terror of his arms to give him the absolute sovereignty of the republic. He hated Florence for the opposition he had experienced although he knew it was Piero's individual act, and there were plenty about him tempted by the prospective plunder of so rich a city who joined in the universal cry for its punishment. Neither was Piero without his partisans: Briçonnet Bishop of Saint Malo, the Seneschal of Beaucaire, and Philip de Bresse, uncle to the Duke of Savoy, were all in his favour; and by the two latter Charles was induced to send a despatch inviting him to return, as it was the king's intention to restore him: but Piero disgusted with his reception at Bologna had proceeded to Venice where, after considerable hesitation, he was by the advice of Philip de Comines most honourably received. On the king's letter following him there he immediately took the dangerous step of asking counsel of the Seignory who now alarmed at Charles's power and the permanent authority which Piero's reëstablishment would give him, strongly advised the latter not to trust

Parte iia, Ar. Stor. Ital., p. 287.—Ricordi di Ser Perizolo di Pisa, Ar. Stor. Ital., vol. vi., Parte iia, p. 391.

* Fran. Coi, Mem. Stor., p. xviii., MS.

himself in the hands of an offended monarch; and to enforce their counsel surrounded him with secret guards while their cordial aid when the occasion favoured him was unhesitatingly proffered. It is good to ask advice, but better to make yourself well acquainted with the adviser: in this instance says Guicciardini the Venetians advised *themselves*, not Piero de' Medici *.

In Florence neither the government nor the people were at their ease: an arrogant monarch with an imposing army was at their gates, and on the seventeenth of November entered the city with great pomp in all the vanity of a conqueror; "*Missus a Deo*" upon his colours, his lance upon his thigh, and surrounded by a brilliant chivalry. He was received at the Porta San Friano under a golden canopy held over him by the young Florentine nobles and attended by the clergy, the Seignory, the various magistracies, and an immense concourse of people, with acclamations more politic and apprehensive than universally cordial; thence was he conducted in a sort of triumph to the Medici Palace which Piero had already prepared for his reception †.

The forebodings of the Florentines were not lessened by Charles's arrival or the warlike aspect of his troops, for absorbed in mercantile pursuits and long unused to military exercises they were struck with apprehension at the scene before them: strange dresses, language, and manners; unusual fierceness and impetuosity, formidable weapons, and above all, the terrific appearance of a numerous artillery kept them in continual dread ‡.

Nevertheless they were not disheartened: they were as fully determined to defend as Charles was to attack their independence: every citizen was prepared and had his house filled with

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. viii.

† Malipiero, Annali Veneti, p. 325.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv., p. 117.—J. Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 23.

‡ Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv., p. 117.—Paulo Giovio, Lib. ii°, p. 47.

armed followers, or troops in the pay of Florence; every man had orders how to act at the sound of the campana, and the whole civic force was kept as much out of sight as possible. This however could not be completely accomplished and the French were accordingly alarmed at the multitude of people, at the augmented boldness of the government, and at the public report that when the campana sounded an innumerable peasantry would rush in from the adjacent country to the aid of their fellow-citizens *.

After a reasonable time having been devoted to the monarch's amusement, negotiations began; but so haughty and extravagant were his terms that the Seignory would not listen to them for a moment: Charles insisted that having entered Florence with his lance upon his thigh it became his by right of conquest and that he would hold and govern it by deputy: he next mentioned the return of Piero de' Medici, but the minute this became known the people flew to arms, the city was in a tumult, and a quarrel arising at the moment between some French soldiers and Florentine artisans in Borgo Ognissanti a sharp struggle ensued which was finally stopped by the exertions of both nations; but this spirited demonstration of public feeling facilitated and even carried the subsequent negotiations †.

The Seignory had deputed Piero Capponi and three other citizens to treat with Charles and tell him that they were resolved to defend their liberty and die sooner than submit to the house of Medici, and public indignation was exasperated by a suspicion that Piero's wife Alphonsina Orsini, the Tornabuoni, and other Medician partisans had been the cause of these insolent demands: the city remained agitated, lights were kept through the night in all the windows, and everything tended towards insurrection, but neither party wished for it, and Piero Capponi found Charles and his prompters much more

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 24.—Vita di Savonarola, cap. vii., p. 25.

reasonable though still disposed to make haughty and inadmissible demands. After much discussion the articles of convention were drawn up on the twenty-fourth of November, but before all was concluded a dispute arose about the amount of contribution with which Charles was dissatisfied, wherefore suddenly starting up he indignantly exclaimed that he would sound his trumpets and not abate one jot of his demand. "Then," said Piero Capponi, while he tore the paper to pieces before the king's face, "*sound your trumpets and our bells shall* "*answer them:*" and so quitted the apartment*.

The boldness and impetuosity of this conduct took the king by surprise, and the prevailing fear of a general rising at the sound of the campana gave strong reason to think that Capponi had well calculated the chances ere he ventured on so audacious a proceeding†. He was immediately recalled, and Charles who had known him well in France, exclaimed with a good-humoured smile, "*Ah Ciappon, Ciappon, vous êtes un* "*mauvais ciappon.*" Thus facetiously turning it off, the articles were drawn as originally agreed on, and a contribution of 120,000 florins assigned to Florence as her contingent to the war expenses‡.

By this convention all commercial relations were restored between the two countries, but Charles was still to retain the fortresses until a truce, a peace, the conquest of Naples, or his departure from Italy should occur. The Pisans were to receive a pardon the moment they laid down their arms; the price set on the head of the Medici was annulled, and Alphonsina was

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv., p. 120. —Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 205.— Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 25.—Vita di Savonarola, cap. vii.—It is to this that Macchiavelli alludes in his Decennali:

"Lo strepito dell' armi e de' cavalli
Non potè far sì che non fosse udita
La voce d'un Cappon fra tanti Galli" (*Decennali* i°, *Stanza* 12.)

Nor could the noise of arms and horses stifle the voice of one capon among so many cocks.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 205. ‡ Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i. p. 25.

to receive her dowry and have free leave to reside in Florence. These and the prohibition to nominate a generalissimo of their armies without the king's leave during the continuance of his enterprise were the principal conditions of this treaty, which was solemnly ratified during high mass in Florence cathedral *.

After some delay and an earnest and bold admonition from Savonarola, Charles by the advice of Aubigny departed on the twenty-eighth of November and with undiminished forces marched to Siena and thence to the Ecclesiastical states: after some negotiations with Rome which was garrisoned by the Duke of Calabria, he successively took Acquapendente, Viterbo, Sutri, Nepi, and entered the Eternal City in triumph on the thirty-first of December, while the Neapolitan army simultaneously marched out of the opposite gate with a royal safe-conduct. Charles himself remained at Rome nearly a month, but sent a portion of his troops to the conquest of Naples; after concluding a treaty with Pope Alexander he followed on the twenty-ninth of January, and with but slight opposition entered Naples as a conqueror on the twenty-second of February 1495†.

During this progress Alphonso had abdicated, and all the talents popularity and ability of Ferdinand were insufficient to compensate for the tyranny of the two last monarchs: there was consequently a general revolt, whereupon after doing his utmost he retired to the island of Ischia and waited for better times. Charles VIII. whose course was by some strange freak of fortune one long-continued triumph, soon abandoned himself to amusements and disgusted everybody; the crusade against Turkey was forgotten, and king, princes, captains, and soldiers, were all plunged in sensual pleasures, when suddenly a storm

* The original treaty was published probably for the first time by the learned Marquis Gino Capponi in the Ar. Stor. Ital., vol. i., in the year 1842—Documento iii°,—and in it Charles assumes a very high tone such as, "*The King pardons his People of Florence for the faults they have committed, as God, of whom kings are the image, pardons the sins of men,*" and other grandiloquence.

† J. Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 28.—Vita di Savonarola, cap. vii., p. 26.—Giannone, Lib. xxix., p. 128.

burst in the north which roused them from every enjoyment: but this belongs to a later period *.

The expulsion of Piero and Charles's departure left the Florentines once more in freedom and at leisure to form a constitution of their own choice; but the king's advent was disastrous; it half-ruined Florence, destroyed the peace of Tuscany, and began a war of sixty-five years' duration in the Italian peninsula. Siena and Lucca were then the only independent Tuscan states all the rest being more or less under Florentine jurisdiction or influence; the ancient factions of the different cities had either ceased to exist or continued in so modified a form as to be harmless; yet these two republics weakened by tyranny, war, and faction, could no longer openly oppose the power of Florence and wisely remained as quiet as the nature of the times would permit. But the passage of Charles VIII. revived Genoa's claims to Sarzana and Pietra Santa, imparted a long-forgotten boldness to Lucca; restored a liberty to Pisa that she had the spirit but not the strength to maintain, and encouraged Siena to revive all her national hatred. Sixty years of subjection had worked a great change in the old republican notions of the Florentines; obedience to a single paramount authority had become habitual in the lower and middle classes; public order and tranquillity were more relished; the sweets of exclusive power had penetrated the mass of higher citizens, and all moved in various orbits round the sun of the Medici. The notions of liberty in those days were dissimilar to ours: if a state were nominally ruled by the many it was called a republic, and freedom was supposed to reign, while the acknowledged rule of one person, under whatsoever denomination, became the terror of free states, and the form of government that kept this phantom at the greatest distance for the longest period was considered best. This principle was sound and wise; but while

* Paulo Giovio, Lib. ii°, p. 721.—Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iv., p. 130-140, and Lib. ii°, cap. ii°, p. 170-8.—Sismondi, vol. ix., p. 37.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. vii., cap. xv.

they thus sought to maintain political liberty or the admission of all *citizens*, not all *classes*, to public office, they seem to have blindly submitted to the infringement of their civil and personal freedom on both ordinary and extraordinary occasions; or rather, not to have comprehended its nature as we now know it; for we have shown that whenever it suited the executive to use an authority, which was also legislative in its working, torture, fine, exile, imprisonment, even the loss of life itself, with confiscation and plunder of property; any or all of these might be inflicted by the Seignory without a murmur being heard from the general mass of citizens; their liberty being that of the community not of the individual. It is true that this unlimited irresponsible power was originally the gift of the citizens themselves, each of them hoping in his turn to enjoy it, and if the nation chose to submit itself to a succession of bimensal dictators nothing could be objected, we can now only marvel at such notions of civil liberty!

These popular governments were however well calculated to develope the nation's faculties: the people by being admitted to political power found it necessary to qualify themselves for it; their minds were gradually polished and refined, and their pleasures and amusements raised to something above those mere sensual enjoyments which are so often a measure of happiness where the mind of many bows to the authority of one, and where all who disdain to move in the given course are made to feel the leaden mantle of despotism more grievously. The human mind naturally abhors control; reason alone confines it; and certainly those institutions are the best which not only seek what will impart happiness to the greatest number, but which also raise the standard of that happiness by as liberal a mixture of intellectual freedom, and as high an exaltation above the mere human animal as can be accomplished. The power, the riches the tranquillity, the long duration of Venice; her steady policy and jealous spirit, which maintained a somewhat gloomy

domestic tranquillity without destroying external energy and enterprise, was daily gaining ground in the estimation of the Italians. Tired of civil broils and the clash of factions they contemplated the internal calm of Venice with envy, and Florence amongst others turned her eyes on the queen of the Adriatic when newly recovered liberty rendered a thorough reform of her institutions indispensable *.

Paulo Antonio Soderini, Bernardo Rucellai, and Guidantonio Vespucci were the great advocates for an aristocratical government; that is they wished to change the chief but not the system; and as the first deserted Piero from personal motives rather than patriotism, the same motives induced him subsequently to advocate the more extensive popular government so enthusiastically supported by Savonarola †.

On the second of December 1494 the Florentine citizens were summoned to one of those general parliaments that invariably sanctioned every resolution proposed to them, because the ascendant party took care by a judicious employment of armed men with various other means, that the place of assembly should be well filled by their friends before any promiscuous admission were allowed to the citizens. A small but select and noisy party stationed immediately round the Ringhiera either led the whole assembly or drowned the expression of its opinion; fearful powers were then blindly conferred by the multitude; and such was their liberty! In the present instance the companies under their respective banners were ordered to assemble without arms: "but *to avoid discord and in order that the place might not be filled with plebeians and enemies of the new government* there were armed men together with some young Florentines posted at every corner of the square." And this too at a moment when after the expulsion of a tyrant the people at large were invited to consult on a plan of universal freedom ‡! The

* Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. i°, p. 158. —Gio. Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero de' Medici, MS.

† Nerli, Comment., Lib. iv°, p. 64-5.

‡ Gio. Cambi, p. 82. — Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 206.

usual ceremony then proceeded, and this solemn mockery finished by the election of a Balià to which absolute authority was granted. The principal changes now made were the abolition of Lorenzo's council of seventy, and that of the hundred; the election of twenty accoppiatori, and the creation of a general council composed of all those citizens whose fathers grandfathers or great-grandfathers had enjoyed the honours of the state in the three greater councils, of which the number amounted to three thousand *.

Paulo Antonio Soderini and Guid-Antonio Vespucci, a famous lawyer of the day, were the chief advocates, the former for a popular government the latter for a continuance of the close Medician system; and this last would probably have prevailed in the councils, naturally reluctant to resign their power, had not divine authority through the eloquence of Girolamo Savonarola been invoked to favour the liberal opinion. Savonarola had now gained the name of a prophet amongst a great majority of citizens because in a time of perfect peace he had foretold the miseries that subsequently occurred, besides many other events, and as he asserted and probably believed, by immediate revelation from Heaven. He had amongst other things indicated; as well he might without any peculiar prophetic inspiration; that great changes were about to occur in Florence; and on the discussions touching the new council he declared it to be divinely ordained that a popular government should be established on such a basis that the liberty and security of the many might not be injured by the few. His great influence uniting with the almost general wish proved too strong for the aristocrats; the great council was decreed as the foundation of national liberty, and all minor considerations left for future consideration †.

The idea of this council it is said originated with Savonarola who took every advantage of public opinion to promote his own

* Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero, &c., MS. † Guicciardini, Lib. ii., cap. i.

views of civil government, not in its detail, or official branches, or little intrigues; all of which it would appear that he studiously avoided; but in its broad principles as they affected religion, morals, order, and social happiness. His benevolence was extended to the popular mass, not to any particular sect or order: the church and the pulpit whether in lectures or sermons were his places of action: his advice was public, frank, and fearlessly given; and considering the close connection between good government and religion, he assumed the right of promoting one by means of the other, and establishing that reciprocal action between them and morality, which can alone work out the real happiness of nations. In one of these sermons preached before the Seignory and all the public magistracies; but from which women and children were excluded; after generally urging the necessity of peace and goodwill, he proposed four things for immediate and especial adoption.

First, the fear of God and a mutual encouragement to reformation of manners, with a rigid attention to the precepts of Christianity in the social intercourse and dealings of the citizens amongst each other.

Secondly, the love of their country; putting that before every private consideration of pleasure, interest, or utility.

Third, universal peace, with the oblivion of all injuries private or public; and by this he intended that all crimes or errors of the Medician party should be pardoned up to the very day in which that family was exiled but reserving the public right to all debts due from individuals of that faction: these were however to be recovered without harshness or indiscretion, and all pains and penalties freely forgiven.

The fourth proposition was to constitute such a government as would comprehend those citizens who according to custom were eligible, yet with the necessary modifications that prudence might dictate, so that no citizen should be able to exalt himself above his equals as had too often happened in the civil broils of by-gone days.

He then proposed the great council of Venice as a model, but modified to suit the habits and customs of Florence. There was great opposition to this, especially amongst the accoppiatori, but such was his influence that another sermon, where he declared it to be God's will that Florence should be governed by the people and not by tyrants carried the proposition triumphantly against every obstacle *.

These accoppiatori had been elected for one year with full powers to hold the election purses "*a mano*," or in other words to appoint whom they pleased to the Seignory, following the Medician system: one of them was Lorenzo de' Medici, now Popolano, in whose favour as under the legal age a special exception had been made by the aristocratic faction which wished to place him in a rank equal to that previously held by Piero. The "Otto di Pratica" according to Cei's Manuscript, was now altogether abolished; an assistant council of eighty was chosen from the great council by the whole mass of citizens into which none under forty years of age were admitted; and instead of the Decemvirate of War, a new Board of Ten; or according to Cei, Twelve; was substituted under the milder title of "*Liberty and Peace*," but with all the usual powers of its prototype; the "Otto di Balia" were dismissed and a fresh magistracy ordered to be elected by the Seignory, Colleges, Accoppiatori, and "Ten of Peace and Liberty," besides other minor reforms, all of which the Council of the people was to see carried into execution †.

It was quickly felt that the accoppiatori were far too deeply imbued with old Medician leaven to suit the altered notions of the people: their legal power was inordinate but they were disunited and therefore weak; one party amongst them was for

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. ii.—Storia di Savonarola, p. 87 and *passim*.—Vita de Savonarola, cap. viii., p. 30.—Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero de' Medici, MS.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 29.

† Gio. Guidacci, MS.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. i°, p. 30.—Giovanni Cambi, p. 83.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 206.—Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., MS., p. 25.

death, exile, admonitions, and all the old course of severity; and in fact they did execute Antonio di Miniato Proveditore del Monte, a universally detested instrument of Lorenzo and Piero, who had been in office since 1478. Through his hands almost all the public revenue passed, and he turned it into any channel that either Lorenzo or Piero commanded: he was the instrument made use of by the former for depreciating the coin, and had by his sole favour risen to such power as subjected every citizen in a manner to his will for Lorenzo esteemed no citizen equal to him, wherefore it seems to have been with universal satisfaction that his long unbridled course of peculation in favour of the Medici was thus arrested. Another victim would have accompanied Antonio di Miniato to the gallows had not Savonarola, who deprecated revenge or bloodshed, interfered to save him: this was Giovanni di Bartolomeo da Prato Vecchio chancellor and notary of the office of Reformations, who exercised a complete but surreptitious control over the public palace and all the magistracies belonging to it according to the pleasure of Lorenzo and Piero by whom he was unscrupulously supported. Thus was the entire government concentrated in these two instruments of Medician tyranny; one controlling the revenue, the other the executive and nearly all the legislative powers of the state. Giovanni was condemned to death but as above said, at the instance of Savonarola his punishment was commuted to imprisonment at Volterra: another portion of the accoppiatori were against severity; this produced disunion, quarrels, enervation, and universal disrepute*.

Savonarola's sermon finally put an end to their authority by forcing them to create the great council and they so staggered under the force of public opinion that when their power of electing the Seignory was withdrawn and placed in the general council they became nerveless; most of the members resigned

* Francesco Cei, Mem. Storiche, p. 29-30, MS.—Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero di Medici, MS.

ere their period of office expired, and being thus rendered imperfect the rest were compelled to follow*.

This resignation however did not terminate before May 1495 nor was it until after that date that the great council became actually formed and a popular government broadly established. The great council-chamber above the present custom-house was built or altered on this occasion with such rapidity as almost to verify Savonarola's remark, "*That angels had occupied themselves on the work instead of masons and labourers, in order to finish it the more quickly.*" At least one thousand citizens were to people that magnificent saloon for six months, and thus be periodically renewed until the whole three thousand who had been declared eligible had had their turn: none were so elected under thirty years of age unless the gross number of candidates fell short of fifteen hundred, in which case the scale of years descended to four-and-twenty; and that number of minor candidates might also be added for the rest of the year: but to prevent this council from ever being too limited, half, instead of a third of the whole number eligible, might sit if that number should ever be less than fifteen hundred unobjectionable citizens †.

These were assuredly the real representatives of a free community; but it was still a community of aristocrats; neither populace nor plebeians if not citizens, found a seat there nor had any voice in its construction; although its detractors (and this shows the spirit of the time and people) endeavoured to disparage it by asserting its exclusively plebeian character‡. On this assembly, which brought political power down to the lowest classes of *citizens*, was imposed the charge of scrutinising, electing, and distributing all the minor offices and greater magistracies; a quarter part of them according to established custom going to the minor arts, except some external appoint-

* Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 65.
† Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 66.—Fran. Cei, Memorie Storiche, p. 31, MS.
‡ Filip. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 66.

ments such as vicars and governors of cities and large towns, which were exclusively enjoyed by the others.

To hold these elections, all citizens eligible to the great council had their names inclosed in a bag called the "*Borsa Generale*" or General Purse, and from this the members of the "*Consiglio Maggiore*" were drawn by lot with a fine of half a florin for non-attendance when summoned by the sound of the campana. From this purse also were drawn the names of those electors who were charged with the choice of citizens fit for the various magistracies within and without the town, and whose names were afterwards "*Squittinati*" and "*Mandati a Partito;*" or in our own language scrutinised and put to the vote. This discretionary choice was afterwards most jealously diminished by substituting the taking of those names which were to be put to the vote, by lot instead of selection for all external offices as well as the minor magistracies within. It was effected by drawing the names of thirty citizens from the general purse as candidates for any specified posts then vacant and putting them successively to the vote; after which, all who were acknowledged to be eligible by a majority of *black* beans were inclosed in another purse and redrawn by lot for the office to be disposed of. After this arrangement few electors were deemed necessary for naming magistrates to the reserved offices, some of which also were subsequently conferred by lot instead of nomination.

Besides this general purse there were two others for every quarter of Florence: in one were contained the names of all the citizens belonging to the minor arts; in the other those belonging to the major, for every quarter of the town; in order that in the elections of the Seignory and other magistracies which were made successively from each quarter the proper electors might be distinctly drawn quarter by quarter and trade by trade. Twenty-four citizens for each quarter were drawn from the purses belonging to it, as electors of the eight Priors,

and three less for the Gonfalonier of Justice: and when the Colleges, the Ten of Peace and Liberty, or any other magistrates of the first order were nominated, the electors were also drawn from these eight purses to the number of from six to ten electors for each individual magistrate. But this mode although continued for a while was not sufficiently extended to suit the growing spirit of the time and especially the less powerful citizens, as will be hereafter seen. In the general council all laws were finally passed and private petitions received and discussed; but only after having gone through the Seignory and Colleges, who had the initiatory power, and the Council of Eighty called "*Il Consiglio degli Scelti*" or "*Pregati*," the select or invited Council, which was renewed half-yearly from the greater by the admittance of persons not less than forty years of age *.

Besides the discussion of laws this council had the nomination of ambassadors and commissaries; they debated on the necessity of peace and war; investigated the conduct of generals and condottieri, and had a voice in almost every other great business of state. By a subsequent law; passed through the influence of Savonarola to prevent the Seignory and "Otto di Balià" from lightly condemning citizens to death, exile, and other severe punishments by six votes alone; appeals were allowed to the general council: this however occasioned considerable difference of opinion and commotion which Savonarola at last ended by repeatedly declaring from the pulpit that God willed the law and therefore it *must be passed!* and it was so †. Thus the Florentine constitution was finally placed on a broad democratic basis as regarded the citizens, for they were complete masters of the state; but there was a far more numerous class of unprivileged inhabitants who like the "*Plebs*" of Rome and under the same denomination, were mere subjects, and had

* Gio. Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero de Medici, MS.

† Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 67.—Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero, MS.

no part in the government; yet the state was now essentially free. With liberty came political power; and freedom of thought and expression; and a fresh infusion of party spirit; and clashing opinions; and private interests; and repeated contention on every change of magistrates: and all these inevitable appendages to free institutions generated new tricks and new disorder amongst the aspiring and unscrupulous Florentines *.

The whole city, and therefore its representative the Great Council, became divided into parties of which the three following were the principal. The first and most numerous was composed of Savonarola's followers and thence called "*Frateschi*," and "*Piagnoni*" or Mourners, for they were grave in demeanour and adhered to the "*Frate*" who preached repentance and reform: they were a sort of Catholic Puritans, desired free government on a broad and popular basis; enjoyed unbounded credit both for number and respectability and had a majority in the Great Council: they wished for liberty, morality, reform in both church and state, and hated Medician tyranny.

The "*Arrabbiati*" and "*Compagnacci*," or the "Madmen," and "Evil-Companions," formed the second party: they derived the second name from a company of young nobles who hating the severity of Savonarola's discipline joined, his adversaries, and were of great service, by drawing after them a numerous train of the more youthful aristocracy, who would have been still more effective if their leader Dolfo Spini had been a more able man. They detested the Medici, revolted against the rigid morality of the monk, and desired a more concentrated government with a distribution of power amongst the higher ranks of citizens alone. Neither could they brook the arrogated authority of the adverse chiefs, especially Francesco Vallori, nor their influence in the council, nor Savonarola's constant theme from the pulpit, "*for the people to favour*

* Filº. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 68.

the good;" meaning his own party which from its superior energy and influence inspired fear*. Guidantonio Vespucci at the head of a few able men made use of this party without joining it; nor had the Arrabiati any excuse for a collision with the Frateschi, because both were of one mind about the two great objects, of keeping the city free and the Medici beyond the walls.

The third party called the "*Bigi*" or Greys (probably from their desire of keeping retired and out of sight in their political movements) wished for the Medici's return and government, but knowing themselves weak and much suspected by other parties they held back and avoided all collision, yet worked secretly and silently in the councils, and rather with the Frateschi as the most powerful, and as containing many who were of their own party before Piero's expulsion, from whom they naturally had more to hope than from the others. This silent aid was not unknown to either of the adverse parties and increased the power of the Frateschi while it alarmed the Arrabiati, some of whom were imprisoned for canvassing votes in favour of those candidates for the magistracy who were known to desire the ruin of Savonarola. The fears of the Arrabiati therefore induced them at once to dissolve this unnatural attachment by supporting the Medician candidates for office, and so give them spirit to withdraw from the Frateschi and act more openly and independently as a party†...

Some of these transactions have been rather anticipated, but such was the general state of parties at Florence in 1495; and it is worth observing that this revolution, complete and violent as it was; attended with the loss of dominion, the revolt of a subject state and city, the distressing exaction of a heavy subsidy, the occupation of the capital, and the mortification of national pride and consideration; was, unlike all others, and

* Filip. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 68.—Sismondi, v. ix., p. 47.
† Ibid., pp. 68-70.

principally through the influence of a simple friar unattended by a single death or exile from party spirit or revenge! *

It is true that Antonio di Miniato was hung and Giovanni da Prato Vecchio imprisoned, his house burned, and his sons banished: but this was only in the regular course of justice for official fraud and malversation, inflicted on men whom a tyrannical power had hitherto protected; but it was not the vengeance of faction. On the contrary a strong and unusual spirit of humanity was shown, by the creation of a Board of Grace to absolve public debtors as well as to pardon delinquents who had been condemned in fines; and so largely was this grace distributed that in despite of all the public financial difficulties and pecuniary pressure of the times; few debtors or fiscal delinquents remained unpardoned. How different was this conduct from the Medician persecutions to say nothing of Lorenzo's especial rapaciousness and extravagance; and more particularly as a loan of 100,000 florins was, from necessity, in a manner forced from both citizens and Jews, and a new tax of ten per cent. imposed on real property according to its rental, under the name of "*Decima*†." This tax was generally popular except with those who under Medician rule had tasted the sweets of a partial and ill-regulated taxation: hence arose divisions, quarrels, and enemies to popular government, yet not all from this source; but an open well-organised and vigorous opposition to Savonarola now commenced with such violence as nearly to drive him for a season both from the city and his political apostleship ‡.

COTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—No change except in Naples, as narrated in the History.

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* Franº. Cei, p. 83, MS.
† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iiº, p. 51.—Gio. Guidacci, Espulsione di Piero de'Medici, MS.—Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor. MS.
‡ Fran. Cei, Memorie Storiche, p. 35, MS.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 32.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM A.D. 1494 TO A.D. 1500.

THE expulsion of Piero de' Medici left Florence in freedom; the departure of Charles VIII. left her once more independent; and both combined gave her time and opportunity for regulating her internal affairs ere she attended to the more difficult enterprise of reconquering Pisa. We have shown that she lost no time in commencing the former, and the public mind was ripe for a change if not for improvement, yet it was eager also for this. The influence of Savonarola was at its height and had stricken deep and forcibly among the roots of society. It was not only the poor the lowly and the ignorant, that submitted to his rule; but the rich, the enlightened, the ablest, the most distinguished of the community were infected by his enthusiasm and bowed to the power of his genius: nay the very children in the streets felt and acknowledged his persuasive influence and conformed to his will. Their ancient national and periodical games called the "*Potenze*" which had become a public, and even a very dangerous nuisance, and which hitherto the whole civil authority had been insufficient to suppress, all melted away under the warmth of Savonarola's exhortations, and their violent character and habit of plundering for individual gain were softened into that of a gentle solicitation for suffering poverty*.

A.D. 1495.

But his moral power, based as it was on religion and sincerity of purpose and quickened by enthusiasm, was not con-

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 48.—Storia di Savonarola, p. 116 and passim.

fined to individual reformation or mere church discipline; or even to the simple improvement of moral principle in the mass of society. He well knew that sound political institutions were the offspring of intelligence and good moral feeling, and that they in their turn reacted on public integrity; but that no human laws would turn a corrupt people into a moral and religious one, and that bad and tyrannical institutions began and continued the progress of corruption until misery, hypocrisy and an undisguised derision of all that is noble or chivalrous overspread and vitiated society. Savonarola's principle was universal good and as his learning was extensive and deep; his knowledge of human nature and public affairs that of a statesman and man of the world, not the cramped perceptions of a cloistered monk; he had long meditated on the character of the natives and government of his adopted country and indignant at Medician despotism pondered the best means of emancipation and improvement*.

He was long-sighted and even prophetic in political events, and probably foresaw that the advent of Charles VIII. would give a rude shock to the unpopular supremacy of a man like Piero de' Medici; whereupon he prepared for a change. The profound respect with which Macchiavelli, Nardi, Ferdinando del Migliore, Guicciardini and Philip de Comines speak of him would leave no doubt of his extraordinary character, even if we had not his own actions and his influence over an acute, enlightened, and investigating people in the highest state of existing civilisation to prove it †.

* Storia di Savonarola, pp. 104, 109, 110.

† Macchiavelli, Dis., Lib. i°, cap. xii. —Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. vi. —Guicciardini, Lib. ii., cap. i°, p. 165. —Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iii., p. 84.—Ferd°. del Migliore, Firenze Illustrata, S. Marco, p. 224.—It is true that Macchiavelli in a letter to a friend (dated March 1497), suspects him of suiting his actions and principles to his own particular interests on a particular occasion; but in the place cited above, written probably long after Savonarola's death, his reverence is striking. (Vide *Lettere Familiare*, *Opere*, *Lettera* 2, "*a un Amico.*")

Comines in relating his interview with Savonarola says, "He always spoke confidently of the king's coming (whatever might be said or written to the contrary) affirming that he was sent by God for the punishment of Italian tyrants and no force could oppose him, no power defend itself from him: that he would enter Pisa, and on that day the state of Florence would fall; as it afterwards happened; for Piero de' Medici was expelled the same hour; and many other things did he predict before they occurred, such as the death of Lorenzo; and declared that he knew all by revelation. *As to me, I believe him to be a good man.* I asked him if he thought that the king would arrive in France without any personal danger from the great preparations of Venice and her allies against him, *with all of which he* (Savonarola) *was better acquainted than I was who had only just come from there &c.*" *. All this and much more equally strong language, are not the sole testimonies from Louis XI.'s clear-headed minister in favour of Savonarola, and proves not only the imposing character of his genius but his minute and correct intelligence of what was passing around; so that between the espionage of his order without, and his knowledge of people's minds as a favourite confessor within; added to his own natural sagacity and clear understanding of Italian politics; he was probably enabled to foretel events in a way that to less penetrating and naturally superstitious minds assumed the mantle of prophecy †. Probably convinced of his own mission he was eager to impress its reality on the world and always spoke as from authority; affirming with confidence that his measures were the will of God; and generally with truth, because they were proposed for and adapted to the universal good. Inspired by such sentiments Savonarola took up his generally acknowledged character, that of high religious feeling and strict morality, frugal and temperate habits and an utter disinterestedness about money, as the foundations of all

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. ii. † Fran. Coi, Mem. Stor., p. 52, MS.

his political influence; and he was justified even as a churchman, because invited by his fellow-citizens, and because that influence was used openly and broadly, not in party purposes, political intrigues, or self-aggrandisement*. By him (at least in the beginning) it was directed to the promotion of enlarged and philanthropic measures of social government aimed at existing abuses and forming a shield against future evils by his endeavours to restore an overreached and oppressed people to social happiness, in the revival of their legitimate rights and privileges.

With these objects he encouraged at the suggestion of public authorities the rising spirit of liberty consequent upon Piero's expulsion; and as a wide foundation for subsequent reforms and a permanent basis of freedom, was as already said mainly instrumental in establishing the great council, not as a perfect thing but a mere bud which had yet to blossom†. Having thus established a legitimate and concentrated organ of the universal will he renewed his public exhortations for the establishment of social peace and a general amnesty up to the expulsion of Piero de' Medici, and simultaneously attacked the most corrupt and tyrannical part of Florentine government with which no real liberty could exist; namely the power of the Seignory and "Otto di Balià" to kill, banish, or imprison any citizen at their pleasure‡. This, which was vulgarly called the "*appeal of the six black beans*," was perhaps Savonarola's most difficult, most humane, and most useful public act, inasmuch as it secured personal safety from the tyranny or subserviency of timid and obsequious magistrates§.

Savonarola, says Guidacci, "preached that order should be

* Storia di Savonarola, pp. 26, 28, 72, 83, 86, 94, 104, 106, 109, 110.

† For. del Migliore, p. 224.—Savonarola, Predica iv., e. viii., Storia, p. 89.

‡ Fran. Cei, p. 42, MS.—Donato Giannotti, della Repub^a, Fiorentina, p. 82.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 34.—Jacopo Pitti., Lib. i°, p. 40.

§ Fifteen days were allowed in which to make the appeal, and this appeal was permitted to be repeated six times in two days *i.e.* three times each day. (Vide *Fran°. Cei, Mem. Stor.*, p. 42, *MS.*)

introduced into the powers of the Seignory so that they might not thenceforth so despotically drive citizens into exile, put them to death, or send them as rebels into perpetual banishment by the sole authority of six black beans, and therefore that the privilege of appeal should be granted; so that whoever felt himself aggrieved might plead his right in such a way that the Seignory could no longer punish men on slight grounds and at the importunity of other citizens as had previously been the case, especially since the year 1433. And he demonstrated with most powerful reasoning that such things had ruined the city of Florence. But about these two subjects of an amnesty and the diminution of the Seignory's power there were contradictory opinions amongst the citizens and much discussion through the town; some were for, others against them, but the Frate still urged his point, saying you must execute them because intended for the general good and therefore pleasing to the Almighty; and you will have to do them at last, for so God wills it; and you must carry them as you have carried other reforms either by good-will or compulsion. Thus the affair remained amidst difficulties, while in the Seignory there was great dissension between those who wished and those who wished not for the law, so that during the time of this Seignory the business remained without any conclusion." * * * * * "But their office having terminated the others for March and April 1495 succeeded who were elected by the before-mentioned twenty Accoppiatori with Tanai de' Nerli for gonfalonier, the names of whose colleagues may be seen in the Priorista. In their time was revived the discussion about the amnesty and appeal from the power of the Seignory; and some approved, and some disapproved: wherefore Frate Girolamo recommenced preaching and proved by the strongest arguments that an amnesty with domestic peace and union ought to be proclaimed and the appeal decreed. To carry these he ordered prayers and masses and fasts in order

God might impress upon the minds of the citizens that they were bound to complete so useful a work both for his honour and the universal good. Hence it resulted that after long disputes a decree was passed in the great council declaring peace amongst the citizens and that no crime against the state committed by any member of the fallen government previous to the expulsion of Piero de Medici on the ninth of November 1494 should be noticed."

The only exception was against those suspected of peculation, wherefore a board of five officers was appointed to examine the accounts of all concerned in the administration of public finances. "And in this decree," continues Guidacci, "was included the appeal by which anyone condemned to death or banishment by the Seignory for political offences, or to a fine of more than 300 florins; whether in purse, life, or exile, might have recourse to the appeal within a given time; and the great council was to hear and determine, and condemn or absolve, as head and principal of the whole people and community of Florence. And this plainly appeared in the said law, and the great benefit and union amongst the people which were effected by the said law was afterwards more clearly acknowledged; because the citizens now began to feel themselves secure and had no longer any fear of being condemned unjustly, nor had they any need to make divisions in the city: and in like manner the Seignory would have no fear of being compelled by powerful citizens to banish either friends or enemies, or of pronouncing a just sentence, as had been the case in former times. This reform was much commended, especially by those who wished to live honestly; and by Fra Girolamo it was said, that the Lord had thus conferred a great benefit on the city of Florence and that this pacification and appeal pleased God wonderfully; he therefore ordered new prayers and thanksgivings for so great a boon, as without His aid it would not have been granted; and in this manner the Seignory terminated their office."

The great change effected by Savonarola in the political morality of Florence, if we may credit one of his adherents, is very remarkable and may possibly be a faithful picture of the first moments of patriotic enthusiasm drawn by an honest man who wished for what he describes. "Because," says Guidacci; himself a member of the great council; "because everything being under the people's control it is necessary that he who aspires to public office or employment by election should bear a virtuous and unimpeachable character with sober habits, and be publicly known as an able man of business: it is also necessary to be well acquainted with the Florentine citizens, their mutual connexions, interests, and dependance, in order when in council to know how to elect others and to have honour in so doing; because the calling of fit and efficient men to public office is requisite, first for the honour of God and the world, and then to maintain the noble character of our country and the common good. And let no man with any other intention aspire to such employments, nor think to succeed by the influence of private connexions, or friendships, or party spirit, or hatred, or rivalry, or any such reasons; but solely for God's honour and the public good" *.

During these transactions the Pisans who had driven every domiciled Florentine from the city and seized their property had been busy reëstablishing their own government on its ancient footing †. It was not a Florentine custom to change

* "*Relazione dell' Espulsione di Piero de' Medici et altre novità seguite in Firenze nel* 1494, *scritta da Giovanni Guidacci per via di Ricordo ad un suo libretto.*" This MS. is cited by Ferdinando del Migliore in his "*Firenze Illustrata* (p. 224, *Edit. Firenze*, 1684—*cap. San Marco*) and was copied along with another MS. by the same author, entitled, "*Memorie delle Mutazione ed Ordinazioni seguite nel governo di Firenze dopo l'Espulsione di Piero de' Medici,*" by Stefano di Francesco Rosselli in 1649 from the original MSS. lent him by the Cavaliere Giovanni Guidacci. The above copy, with several other MSS. of the same date, once belonging to the Verrazzano Library at Florence, is now in the author's possession.—The original MS. was imperfect.

† Fran°. Cei, Mem. Stor. p. 34, MS.

the forms of local government in subject states and those of Pisa had scarcely been touched, so that all the magistracies were already embodied, and with the addition of a general council of the people their ancient constitution was promptly restored; to this the determined undaunted spirit of a united community gave life and vigour. From a government which was the concentrated opinion and force of the commonwealth all acts seemed good, and everything went smoothly, because do what it might it was still the organ of public will and the depositary of public confidence; the only sound principle of legitimate sovereignty from pure democracy to absolute monarchy.

Like the fiery symbol of the Caledonian Highlanders the red-crossed banner of Pisa flew through every town and village of their ancient state and roused the people to war and liberty; by every one was it hailed and sped with enthusiastic shouts, and in a few days almost all the republican territory was up in such arms as circumstances allowed them to command *. The Florentines absorbed in their domestic revolution had neither time nor means, nor inclination to stem this first burst of liberty but were soon compelled to arrest its progress: for this purpose Ercole Bentivoglio and other condottieri were engaged with a large body of troops which under the direction of Piero Capponi and Francesco Valori, as Florentine commissaries, recovered almost all the Pisan territory from a badly armed and undisciplined peasantry, the sole defenders as yet assembled beyond the walls of Pisa; so that in a short time Vico Pisano, Cascina, and Buti were the only places that still sustained her independence. The Pisans still exerting themselves to retain the favour and countenance of Charles VIII. were strongly supported by every French courtier except the Cardinal of San Malo, who steadily insisted on justice to Florence: all the rest, whether from Pisan gold, Pisan misfortunes, or the fascination

* Fran. Cei, Mem., p. 34, MS.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii, p. 33.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi. p. 207.

of Pisan women, but probably all three; were animated with a feeling of generous sympathy towards a helpless nation imploring their protection; and with all that chivalrous spirit that so frequently flashes even from some of the darkest spots in the French character, they warmly and earnestly advocated the Pisan cause. The wavering monarch, embarrassed by his inconsiderate promises to Pisa and his solemn engagements to Florence, vibrated like a pendulum between doubt and inclination and knew not what to do: the ambassadors on both sides were commanded to plead, and Charles with an evident leaning to Pisa was yet so strongly urged by the other side to fulfil his solemn engagements that Briçonnet Cardinal of Saint Malo proceeded to Florence with a commission to arrange the business by negotiation, and if possible induce the Florentines to pay up the remainder of their contribution although not yet due. He partly succeeded in the latter, but failed in the former object of his mission if it were ever really contemplated; and the intelligence of Naples having fallen came in a happy moment to extricate him from the pretended difficulty in which Pisa's refusal to listen to any terms of accommodation had placed him; for the king's object was money not restitution *.

Lucca and Siena although afraid to declare themselves openly against Florence sent succours clandestinely to Pisa; the first supplied her with grain and three hundred soldiers, the second troops alone †. Lodovico the Moor who had at first encouraged the Pisan revolt, although afraid openly to violate his engagements with Florence, referred the Pisans to Genoa which notwithstanding its dependance on Milan still retained a certain liberty of national action. Their ambassadors made a simple and pathetic appeal to the Genoese senate and exposed their country's wrongs with such eloquence before the ancient rivals and bitterest enemies of their once glorious republic that a

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., pp. 207-210. —Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 33.

† Mazzarosa, Storia di Lucca, vol. ii., p. 27.

board of eight citizens was immediately created with authority to supply both arms and money, while Alessandro de' Negroni was commissioned to see that all Genoese places in the Pisan neighbourhood rendered every assistance in their power to that republic *. The generosity of Genoa was stimulated by the authority of Lodovico and the promise of recovering Sarzana and Pietra Santa, more than by any real sympathy with an oppressed people, for this is rarely an insulated cause of friendship or hostilities between any nations within the pale of civilisation †.

Two hundred men-at-arms, two hundred light cavalry and four hundred infantry under Jacopo d'Appiano served the Pisans at the expense of Lucca, Siena, and Genoa; and thus the descendant of one of their greatest tyrants now acted in defence of their liberty along with the very nation whose arms had formerly broken their ancient power and led to their subjection. The Pisans had also engaged Luzio Malvezzi an officer of some reputation entirely under the influence of Lodovico and a determined enemy of the Florentine commander Bentivoglio, whom he defeated with the loss of all his infantry at the Ponte del Serchio ‡. While this bad fortune attended the Florentine arms in the Pisan territory Montepulciano became discontented at a salt-tax, which was increased one-fourth by Lorenzo's base currency, and aided by secret plots on the part of Siena revolted in March and obtained the protection of that republic notwithstanding its alliance with Florence.

When the Florentines; naturally inclined to France and kept more faithful by Savonarola; requested Charles the VIII.'s interference in this matter according to treaty, by which he had guaranteed the integrity of Florence and her dominion: they were answered by a sarcasm that might be appositely applied to kingdoms much nearer home "*What can*

* Giustiniani, Annali di Genoa, Lib. v., Carta ccli.

† Malipiero, Annali Veneti, p. 348.—Archiv. Stor. Ital, vol. vii.

‡ Guicciardini, Lib. iii., cap. i°.

I do for you," exclaimed Charles, "*if you treat your subjects so ill that they all revolt against you* ?*" The rebuke was just, and merited, but came ill from one so false as Charles; a man so far from justice, treaties, or good faith, that he at this very time despatched an auxiliary force of six hundred Swiss and Gascon infantry by sea to Pisa. With this reënforcement Malvezzi recovered almost all her territory, drove the Florentines from Pontadera and from the strong and lofty, though small fort of Verruca, built on the south-eastern end of the mountain range which divides the Lucchese states from the territory of Pisa; and commanded an extensive view of the whole plain by which the Florentines were compelled to approach. and was thus enabling him to discover and anticipate all their movements†.

* Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. ii°, p. 177. —Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, pp. 34-36.

† Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., pp. 211-12. The sides of this hill are nearly covered with pine woods. It rises in a conical shape to nearly three-fourths of its height, with a very steep ascent, and then flattens for a space to the northward into a narrow shelf, and then a second cone of steep weather-worn rocks shooting up in pinnacles. On this, as on a cluster of stone piles, stands the now ruined fort, one mass of rock shooting up *within* its walls. The entrance is still somewhat difficult, and the fort is vaulted into extensive cisterns, in which the water springing as is said from the rock below, never fails. The view from the ramparts is magnificent. Close under, on the northern plain, lies the enormous convent of Certosa, with its many cloisters, where sixteen lonely monks are now lost amidst the dwellings of its once numerous inhabitants. This monastery is sheltered by the high-reaching range of the Saint Julian hills, which lead the eye along the shores of Genoa until they melt into air. Still further to the left Corsica rises like a vision, nearer is Elba; (both memorials of the fickleness of fortune) jutting out to meet it appears the old Etruscan Populonia. As the eye sweeps round the picture, it rests on a wide-spread fertile plain, bounded by ranges of hills, until it reaches the distant Apennines and Pistoian Alps, and follows the Arno from the Golfolina to the sea. There, and not far from its mouth, is seen the Serchio like a young serpent by the side of its mother. Hard by, Capraia and Gorgona seem ready to comply with Dante's wish, and drown the guilty Pisa whose marble palaces lie sparkling in the plain below, doubling their beauties in the Arno as it sweeps their base. No army could move in any part of these plains without being seen from the Verruca, which would be difficult to take, because it is commanded by nothing near enough to do mischief, but commanding no approach to Pisa is of little use except as a signal station.

Meanwhile a powerful league was gathering in the north of Italy against the French monarch: Lodovico and the Venetian republic chief movers of this the strongest confederacy ever made in Italy, invited Florence to join it; and disgusted by Charles's conduct the nearly exhausted patience of that state would have given way altogether had not the spirit of Savonarola animated most of the community. The extraordinary influence of this man, his continued prophetic threatenings, his constant declaration that Charles was the chosen instrument of Heaven to punish crime and reform the Church, altogether maintained the French alliance against every attempt to shake it both external and domestic, and in defiance of priests and monks and adverse citizens who had combined to ruin both the treaty and enthusiast. Savonarola boldly and pertinaciously continued to declare that notwithstanding a foreign invasion which was to cause infinite misfortunes, it still behoved them to support the minister of God's wrath although he had not yet fulfilled the whole extent of his mission; and the Lord's hand would lead him safely out of every danger because he was still a divine instrument and an appointed messenger*.

The strong impression made by an earnest and incessant repetition of these prophecies in eloquent language, was felt by the community; even many governing citizens believed, or pretended they believed; and were therefore unwilling to place themselves in the first rank of opposition to the French monarch's return, but on the contrary followed Savonarola's enthusiastic and visionary councils, yet without neglecting human means.

Like the Calvin of after days Savonarola bent the public mind to his will by working on their superstition; but Calvin and his followers were harsh and sanguinary bigots, unjust, unmerciful, intolerant, and severe; whereas the

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 214.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 36.

Italian was an enlightened well-meaning enthusiast and no persecutor.

The rapid progress of Charles; the ruin of the Neapolitan house of Aragon; the pretensions of Louis Duke of Orleans to Milan; the scarcely dissembled ambition of the French to conquer Italy in almost every part of which they occupied strongholds; all united to alarm her various potentates. Besides the king's complete command of Tuscany, the pontiff the Orsini and even the Colonna had been stripped for the moment of their strongest places of arms as pledges of fidelity, and all the peninsula seemed to lie prostrate before him. The Duke of Milan was refused possession of Tarento until Naples were entirely reduced*; Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, besides a national hatred of France, deplored the evil fortune of their cousin whose power had sustained the family reputation; Sicily too became endangered by the ambition of Charles, and to prevent a further abasement of the Holy See was in all eyes sufficient reason for any breach of faith with that monarch. The wrath of Maximilian still ran high against the man who had repudiated his daughter and snatched an affianced bride from his arms, and Venice beheld with alarm the rapid march of events: Lodovico in particular became keenly sensible of his mistaken policy, saw a formidable domestic enemy in the brave and aspiring Orleans, and trembled for Milan. The consequence was a secret meeting of all their ambassadors at Venice even while Charles was still in Florence, but on its detection by Philip de Comines they dropped the mask and formed a powerful league against France in March 1495 by which thirty-four thousand horse and twenty thousand foot were to be immediately raised at the general expense, with a fleet if necessary. The league was to hold good for five-and-twenty years between the Pope, the King of the Romans, (for Maximilian had never been crowned at Rome)

* Paulo Giovio, Lib. ii., p. 73.

the two sovereigns of Spain, the Venetian republic and the Duke of Milan. Three objects were proposed. First to defend Christendom against the Turks; but this was a mere veil, for the Turkish ambassador took an active part in it and offered to attack the French by land and sea: the second for the defence of Italy, and the third for the preservation of their several dominions *. To accomplish this the pope engaged to pay four thousand horse; Maximilian six; and Spain, Venice, and Milan, each eight thousand while the mass of infantry was equally portioned amongst them. These were the published articles; but a secret understanding changed the whole character of this convention to an offensive league against the king of France †. On the side of Spain this was soon apparent, for a small fleet and army ere long made its appearance off the coast of Sicily under the renowned Gonsalvo de Cordova with the intention of aiding Ferdinand of Naples to recover a throne which the weakness of Charles and the arrogant oppression of his barons had already rendered insecure ‡. The Venetians were to attack the south and eastern coasts of Naples; Lodovico to cut off the land communication with France and drive the Duke of Orleans from Asti; and the kings of Spain and the Romans were to invade that kingdom on the northern and southern frontier. But Maximilian could never be trusted even when really well inclined to a cause; his own dominions were in disorder; the German princes would not assist him, and three thousand men were all that he ever raised for the confederacy. The Florentines and Duke Hercules of Ferrara remained timidly aloof; but the latter permitted his son Alphonso to join the allied army with a body of cavalry as a private condottieri of the Duke of Milan §. The league's offer

* Malipiero, Annali Veneti, pp. 333-338.—Paulo Giovio, Lib. ii., p. 73.—Phil. de Comines, Mem., Lib. vii., cap. xv., *passim*.

† Guicciardini, Lib. ii., cap. ii., p. 176.—Sismondi, vol. ix., p. 70.

‡ Paulo Giovio, Lib. ii., p. 73.

§ Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. ii°, p. 177

to Florence was a powerful army to defend her territory and and every after assistance to recover Pisa and Leghorn: Charles's faithless conduct had irritated the citizens; all their bribes to the Cardinal of Saint Malo procured only a cold advocate who preferred peace with the great French lords that opposed him to friendship with the Florentines; they had been plundered, and scoffed, and insulted; but they repressed a dangerous anger, and independent of all superstition expected more from the actual holder of their property, however faithless, than from the national enmity of Venice or the suspicious declarations of a man like Lodovico who was himself intriguing for the possession of the very places that he thus guaranteed to Florence *.

Charles VIII. and his army were now equally impatient to return home; the reputation of both had diminished; the Turkish expedition was forgotten in the pleasures of Naples; ease, luxury, and a genial climate had enervated them; the king, always inefficient, became yet more so from undeserved success, and governed carelessly; the Aragonese were still suffered to hold Brindisi, Reggio, and other places whence they could have been easily expelled, and the conquest remained incomplete: there was a lavish alienation of the public revenues to insatiable followers; state business was abandoned to favourites; the Neapolitan nobles were slighted; audiences were difficult; ranks levelled; merits unacknowledged; the enemies of Aragon neglected; difficulty and delay were opposed to the restitution of their confiscated estates; grace and favour were sold for bribes; deprivations were ordered without occasion, gifts without reason, offices filled exclusively by Frenchmen; crown

* Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. i°, p. 178. Malipiero, however, asserts that Florence actually coalesced with the league and concluded a treaty at Genoa in June, by which she engaged to impede Charles VIII.'s passage into Lombardy and was to be aided by Genoa in the recovery of Pisa, Genoa receiving Sarzana, Sarzanella, and Pietra Santa, from the League as the price of her own accession, (vol. vii, *Arc. Stor. Ital.*, p. 349.) But Guicciardini could scarcely have been ignorant of this treaty, if ever concluded.

lands absorbed by them and crown vassals oppressed, against all promise and against all custom. In addition to this, a more than national pomp and pride and insolence and injuries marked the steps of France: at Naples and elsewhere the Italians were despised and made to feel it, so that a hatred as intense as past desire began to burn against the invaders, while pity and returning sympathy for the acknowledged merits of Ferdinand became every day more ardent. Such, as we are assured by Guicciardini, was the temper and condition of Naples and its conquerors; nay, so great was the reaction that even Alphonso's name was received with kindness; his former cruelty was now exalted into a just rigour and his arrogance and pride were softened into frankness and sincerity. "And such is the nature of man;" adds Guicciardini, "always inclined to hope for more than he ought; to tolerate less than is necessary, and never to be satisfied with the present;" but the Neapolitan nation above all others in Italy was at this epoch notorious for instability and love of change*.

The account given by Philip de Comines of the northern confederacy augmented Charles's desire to return, for it was the most formidable combination of Christian powers that had been known for centuries and placed him and his army in jeopardy. The kingdom was unsettled; neither would Alexander VI. consent to invest him with its sovereignty so he proclaimed himself, assumed the crown in May, and on the twentieth of that month marched at the head of half his army towards Tuscany leaving the remainder under. Gilbert de Montpensier and Stuart of Aubigny to settle the conquest. The first was viceroy, a man of no ability; the second constable of the kingdom, full of military talent and experience†. Alexander had applied for succours from the league, which at first were promised but afterwards declined through fear of weaken-

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. i°.—Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. ii°, p. 179.
† Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii°, cap. i°.

ing the army, and the pontiff was advised to retire from Rome at the approach of Charles who only remained three days in that city but restored Terracina and Civita Vecchia while his army was suffered to depredate all the neighbouring country.

At Siena the king wasted several days although Philip de Comines assured him that no less than forty thousand soldiers of the league were gathering in arms to stop his passage; but says the old statesman, "he was surrounded by young men who fancied that none but themselves carried arms." Here he received the Florentine ambassadors who came to claim the performance of his promise, and who offered not only to pay the 30,000 florins still due of their contribution, but to lend him 70,000 more and even let their experienced general Francesco Secco with three hundred men-at-arms and two thousand infantry accompany him to Asti. These were tempting baits and Comines strongly urged the king's acceptance of them; but the same youthful court had been so struck with generous sympathy for the Pisans that this offer was refused and national honour sacrificed to natural feeling*.

The affair was postponed until Charles arrived at Lucca, and the Florentines startled by these open and continued symptoms of aversion became apprehensive of admitting the French again within their walls or of even allowing them to march through the country: this last was more than they could prevent; but their fears were confirmed by an intercepted letter from Piero de' Medici who was in the French camp to Piero Corsini, which left no doubt of his intention to take that occasion of making a bold attempt at his own restoration. This exhausted their patience; they at once armed themselves, filled the city with troops, barricaded their streets, and finally called the Venetian forces to their aid but without joining the league: they moreover roundly declared that Piero should neither enter Florence or pass through its territory, wherefore the king ordered him to

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. ii., pp. 485-7.

proceed to Lucca accompanied by two Florentine officers and a mace-bearer of the Seignory without crossing the frontier in his journey*. "It was marvellous," says Nardi, "to behold in what little time a vast provision of offensive and defensive arms, and an enormous quantity of every sort of victuals were accumulated: every citizen strove in private emulation who should be most successful in supplying such necessaries, which were ordered without restriction by the Seignory and those commissaries who were deputed both without and within to see this duty performed, so that the whole population almost to the very children were armed"†.

Girolamo redoubled his prayers and preaching; public and private devotions filled the town; the sacred image of "*Santa Maria dell' Impruneta*" was brought in solemn state to Florence as a panacea for every woe; she was followed in procession by all the secular clergy, all the religious orders, all the companies and fraternities of Florence and finally by the whole population in two long lines of male and female penitents. But the most remarkable feature in this ceremony was the total absence of old accustomed pomp and magnificence: the simple spirit of Girolamo pervaded all: no gold, no silver, no rich vestments, no great presents from the magistrates, no gifts from the people; but large sums of money were freely given for distribution to the poor, and a calm and decent solemnity overshadowed all‡.

Many other preparations were made for public security in case of Charles's entering Florence: some of the city gates were closed and built up; the private houses and towers were supplied with stones; guards patrolled the streets by night, and eleven thousand cuirassed infantry independent of soldiers, besides the private friends and retainers of the citizens, of which each house was full, were collected in the streets and suburbs of Florence by the time Charles had entered Siena.

* Malipiero, Annali Veneti, p. 348.—J. Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 37.—Sismondi, vol. ix., p. 85.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 213.
† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii. pp. 37-38.
‡ Ibid.

Few of the condottieri or their followers were admitted: the citizens had learned caution from the infidelity of their mercenary troops and leaders in treating with the French about the affairs of Pisa, and therefore trusted to Florentines alone*. These formidable preparations to receive an ally no doubt affected the king's line of march; nevertheless after leaving a guard of four hundred soldiers in Siena he moved on Poggibonzi and there gave audience to Girolamo Savonarola on the seventeenth of June. Although requested to accept it, Girolamo refused the dignity of Florentine ambassador, choosing the more awful character of a divine messenger and trusting to heavenly inspiration for the force and efficacy of his discourse. Charles always listened earnestly to Savonarola, who after reproaching him in his usual eloquent and impressive language suddenly assumed a more solemn and imposing tone and no longer as an humble friar but in the bold severe spirit of prophecy, exclaimed, "Beware O king of the divine anger which "will surely fall like a thunderbolt on thy most precious objects "with irreparable ruin if that, for the performance of which "thou didst call on God as thy witness and security, be not "faithfully performed"†.

Savonarola had already said this to Philip de Comines at Florence and impressed that strong-minded statesman with a profound and perhaps awful sense of his extraordinary character, as is palpable in many parts of his Memoirs; no wonder then that the king's mind was somewhat shaken after a repetition of these denunciations at Castel Fiorentino where the friar left him; and at the Dauphin's decease which occurred not long after and was deemed a fulfilment of the prophecy, they were perhaps more keenly remembered‡.

The king's visit to Florence was finally renounced; he took

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 38.

† Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. iii°, p. 196. —Jacopo Nardi, Lib, ii°. p. 39.— Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 214.

‡ Philip de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. ii°, p. 487; cap. iv., p. 493.; cap. vi°, pp. 505, 509, 516; cap. vii., p. 521.

the road to Pisa and reached that city when public excitement was at its height: men women and children were in tears: they hung round the officers and soldiers imploring their good offices with Charles to save them from Florentine tyranny, and even Comines asserts that they had been treated most abominably like many other subject cities. The whole army even to the meanest soldier Swiss or Frenchman, was moved to compassion by their piteous lamentations and long tale of misfortune: sorrow became contagious; the excitement rapidly increased; the cardinal of Saint Malo and a few others who had shown a disposition to keep faith with Florence were threatened by the French themselves; the president Gannai for three nights was afraid to sleep at his own quarters, the Marshal de Giè was insulted, and Comines himself saw an archer of the guard brave the cardinal of Saint Malo to his face; and all for urging Charles to keep a solemn oath pledged, in conjunction with the sacrament, on the great altar of Florence! But they were accused, perhaps truly, of being bribed with Florentine gold, and therefore had no favour in Pisa.

Fifty gentlemen of the royal household with their battleaxes on their shoulders entered the king's private chamber when he, almost alone, was playing a game of chance with one of his courtiers, and demanded protection for unfortunate Pisa. Monsieur Sallizard who took the lead, implored him for the sake of his own honour; for the glory of France's crown; for the consolation of so many of his own servants, all ready to die for him and who would give him more sincere counsel than men corrupted by the Florentines; not to withdraw that favour he himself had so lately conferred on the Pisans; and sooner than any want of money should induce him to commit such an act, they offered him the silver chains and ornaments from their necks with their arrears of pay and pensions; so strong and generous and universal was this feeling in the army*. Charles, weak

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii°, cap. iii°, p. 489.

and wavering as usual, dismissed them from his presence without any reply; but while assuring the Pisans that he never would deliver them up to Florence he told the Florentine ambassadors who awaited him at Lucca, that what he could not accomplish then and there he would arrange satisfactorily at Asti*.

Charles then resumed his rout by easy marches in order to await the result of an attempt on Genoa; which ended in the defeat of his forces both by sea and land; and arriving before Pontremoli gained it by a capitulation which the Swiss under Giacopo Trivulzio's command most treacherously broke, on account of some former enmity, and setting fire to the town committed an indiscriminate massacre of the inhabitants†. From Pontremoli the French army crossed the Apennines with infinite difficulty, the Swiss troops endeavouring to atone for conduct so infamous by their voluntary exertions in dragging the artillery over mountains which without their aid would never have been passable. This breach of capitulation had struck terror through the country and kept off every supply, and as the conflagration had destroyed all provision stores Charles and his army were in a precarious state. He nevertheless halted with the main body near Pontremoli while Marshal de Giè led the advanced guard over the hills and placed himself in position opposite the allied army at Fornovo on the river Taro, about twelve Italian miles from Parma. The guns next followed over an almost pathless mountain, each piece being dragged by from one to two hundred Swiss soldiers with incredible exertion. No artillery except one or two falconets of about five hundred pounds weight, had ever before passed there and even this created wonder; but now fourteen guns of the heaviest calibre began to ascend a mountain so

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 39.—Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. iii°, p. 198.
† Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii, cap. iv., p. 494.—Memoriale di Gio. Portovenere, p. 316, vol. vi., Parte ii., Ar. Stor. Ital.

very steep that even mules could scarcely make their way*. The descent was still more difficult; there was no resting place at the summit; and every horse and mule were necessary to prevent the guns from rolling headlong down the steep and shaggy mountain: many officers proposed to abandon the heavier pieces but Charles would not hear of this, and after three days of incessant toil the whole army rejoined their advanced guard near Fornovo.

The allies had already been eight days encamped, and though not all assembled had an overwhelming force: they might have destroyed the advanced guard long ere the main battle had passed the hills; and the king on his part; had he not delayed at Siena Pisa and Pontremoli, might have reached France in perfect security: but "God conducted the operations," saith Comines, and their notable mismanagement by men throughout the whole expedition coupled with its unparalleled success seems to have impressed the Sieur d' Argenton and many others with a deeper faith than he appears willing to acknowledge in the inspiration of Girolamo Savonarola †.

The allies were encamped below Fornovo; the French occupied that place; but the first position of both armies was in a stony plain on the right bank of the Taro bared by the floods and torrents of that river. There is nothing more puzzling than an attempt to estimate the numbers of cavalry throughout most periods of Italian history, but perhaps still more so in that now under consideration. The French lance was estimated at six horses, two being mounted by archers; and according to Comines the Italian man-at-arms was composed of but four, of which one was ridden by a crossbow-man: other authors vary, and there seems to have been a sort of fashion in the mutable strength of a lance, which would appear at least in Italy and Savoy to depend entirely on the contract made with a condot-

* Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. iv. and v.
† Mem. de Comines, cap. v., p. 500.

tiere, and therefore entirely conventional; but at all times the "*lance*," or "*man-at-arms*" proper, would appear to be the only heavy-armed steel-clad soldier of the number *. According to Comines the allies had about thirty-five thousand men of all arms, and the French about nine thousand including valets and other armed attendants of the great lords †.

Charles arrived at Fornovo on the fifth of July, and on the sixth he meant to have continued his march without a blow: Lodovico and the Venetians would gladly have permitted this, and both civil and military commanders were in doubt; but two such armies seldom draw so near to part in peace: the king sent Comines to treat and simultaneously began to move across the river while his artillery cannonaded the allies; this of course broke off all negotiation and the battle began ‡. The young Marquis of Mantua who commanded the league, seeing that Charles had crossed the Taro and was marching in three divisions down its left bank; stationed a powerful reserve in camp and advanced with the remainder up the opposite side, giving time for the enemy's advanced guard and main battle to increase their distance from each other and from the rear division. Sending a large body of Stradiotes, or Greek irregular horse in the Venetian service, to capture the French baggage which wound its way amongst the hills, he ordered another division of these formidable swordsmen with five thousand infantry, and six hundred men-at-arms to follow him over the river at Fornovo while Antonio di Montefeltro and a strong reserve remained in position on the right bank ready to cross and attack when called upon. As soon as he was well engaged with the enemy's rear, a detachment of Stradiotes had orders to pass the river and assail their left flank while the Count di Caiazzo of San Severino with four hundred men-at-arms and two thou-

* Guicciardini, Lib. i°, cap. iii.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii°, cap. v°.—Cibrario, Econ. Polit. del Medio Evo, p. 104.

† Comines, Lib. viii°, cap. ii° and vi°.

‡ Ibid., caps. v. and vi.—Guicciardini, Lib. ii., cap. iv.

sand infantry also crossed the Taro and charged the French advanced guard in front. Besides these, Annibale Bentivoglio was also left on the Taro's right bank with another reserve of two hundred men-at-arms.

Had no accidents happened this plan of attack with so superior a force, excepting that on the baggage, seemed well calculated for success; but in war above all other things the slightest accidents are often fatal. The Marquis of Mantua led his men on bravely, but after a while they gave way before the valour and impetuosity of France; the Stradiotes also overtook and captured the baggage; but this was far too alluring a prize for their countrymen engaged in the flank attack, who immediately left their work to share the plunder; their example was followed by many of the Italians both cavalry and infantry. The Marquis of Mantua was most gallantly pressed by the king in person; Rodolfo di Gonzaga who was to give the signal for Montefeltro's advance was killed early, wherefore the latter like a good soldier remained immoveable and the marquis was compelled to fly. Caiazzo advanced to the attack in front, but turned and fled without breaking a lance: his antagonist the Marshal de Giè suspected a feint and would not follow him for which he was both blamed and praised; but the repulse was complete and the whole French army soon closed up on its line of march without further obstruction. They had lost but two hundred men, the enemy three thousand five hundred *: many of the men-at-arms after having been unhorsed were killed with wood-axes by the camp followers; but so complete was their defensive armour that Comines tells us he saw from three to four of these ruffians attempting to kill one man: the French made no prisoners, but their captive Count Orsino of Pitigliano escaped during the combat and by rallying his countrymen

* This differs entirely from Malipiero, who makes the French loss from 1000, and 600 prisoners to 2500, besides wounded, and not more than 1000 of the allies—but Guicciardini and Comines are most trust-worthy: yet Malipiero goes as high as 6000 in the pursuit.

saved the allied army from complete disorder. Charles did not renew the battle or he would have conquered; his whole army was too uneasy, and moreover ignorant of the enemy's confusion. On the seventh of July he again sent Comines to negotiate but as this was postponed by the allies until the following morning he decamped during the night, and closely followed by the enemy arrived safely at Asti after considerable difficulty and suffering, on the fifteenth of July 1495 *.

The Duke of Orleans at this moment occupied Novara with seven thousand five hundred men, and twenty thousand Swiss troops arriving soon after, he became impatient for a renewal of hostilities; but Charles and his army were just as eager to return, wherefore making a separate treaty of peace with the Duke of Milan he quitted Turin and Italy, but left a world of woes behind.

Thus ended the first act of this remarkable expedition, the offspring of vanity, folly, and injustice: an expedition which contributed to entail everlasting pestilence and inflicted long years of war on Italy †; which made that beautiful land an arena for the rivalry of two great conflicting monarchies; opened wide the portals of a Charles's ambition and a Philip's tyranny, and finally reduced it (must we say for ever?) under the hard domination of transalpine strangers! Recalled by the public voice Ferdinand II. of Naples hastened to regain his crown and succeeded; the French army being un-

* Malipiero, Annali Veneti, pp. 356 to 367.—Cagnola, Storia di Milano, p. 199.—Paulo Giovio, Lib. ii°, p. 88.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. vi.—Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. iv°.—Corio, Hist. Milan, Parte vii., fol. 481, et seq.—Gio. Portovenere, p. 317.—Bembo, Historia Vinitiana, Lib. ii°, fol. 24 [Vinegia, 1556].

† This pestilence, probably, was not brought into Italy by the French, but into Spain by the seamen of Columbus in March, 1493, and thence by Spaniards to Naples while the French were there and their armies spread the contagion over all Italy. In two years from its first introduction into Spain, it had extended over more than half Europe—a sad index to human frailty! (Vide *Sismondi*, vol. ix., p, 118.) But there are various accounts of this malady. Portovenere, p. 337, and note, vol. vi., Parte ii°, Ar. Stor. Ital.

skilfully managed by the Viceroy became disheartened on seeing themselves deserted by their king, and enemies thickening around them. The expedition against Genoa had totally failed by land, and the French squadron was entirely destroyed off Rapallo by eight Genoese galleys which recaptured the town and compelled their army to retire into Piedmont. About the same time that Charles quitted Naples Ferdinand II. had landed in Calabria with a small Spanish force from Sicily and occupied Reggio, the citadel of which he had constantly held, while at the same moment the Venetian fleet appeared off Puglia under Antonio Grimani. At this time Ferdinand still retained possession of Ischia, the Lipari Islands, Terranuova and other strongholds in Calabria; also Brindisi where his uncle Don Frederic commanded, besides Galipoli, La Manzia, and La Turpia; and he had moreover with the small Spanish and Sicilian force under Gonsalvo de Cordova assembled about six thousand men. Gonsalvo Hernandez d'Aguilar of Cordova had signalised himself in the wars of Granada but was only surnamed the "*Great Captain*" on his arrival in Italy, according to the usual inflated style of the Spaniards, merely to signify his chief command over them; his subsequent exploits however gave a sterling value to the appellation, and as it were, stereotyped the previously unmeaning name *.

Aubigny hastened to quash this invasion and routed Ferdinand at the battle of Seminara where his new and inexperienced levies could make little head against the well-directed discipline of France. In this battle Ferdinand's horse was killed and his own life would have soon followed had not Giovanni di Capua, who had been his page and was now his friend, dismounted and given him his, with the certainty of falling as he instantly did under the swords of the enemy. Gonsalvo fled across the mountains to Reggio, Ferdinand to the port of Palmi near Seminara and thence to Messina,

* Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. ii°, p. 184; cap. iv°, p. 223; and cap. v., p. 225.

nothing daunted by misfortune and eager for another trial ere the intelligence of this defeat should have cooled the general wish of the Neapolitans for his return. Assembling an imposing but scantily manned squadron he appeared off Salerno, and in an instant not only that city but Amalfi and La Cava hoisted his royal banner; then running into the Bay of Naples he waited for some indication of revolt but in vain; not from any want of inclination but in consequence of French vigilance.

While sorrowfully bearing away for Ischia his hopes were revived by a secret message from the Neapolitans urging him to land and bring everything to a crisis: upon this he ran boldly over to Maddalena at the mouth of the little river Sebeto and began disembarking his people. Montpensier in alarm marched out to oppose him, and then the bells of the Carmine began to sound, and church after church took up the peal; the people flew to arms; the port was seized and occupied, and the name of Ferdinand resounding through the city was borne in a thousand echoes to the heights above. Alarmed at this sudden outbreak and despairing of an entrance by the gate from which they had issued, the French made a long circuit of the walls and had thus given time for Ferdinand to gain an entrance: he was soon on horseback and showed himself in every quarter amidst showers of roses and garlands and odoriferous waters.

Castelnuovo was instantly invested and a succession of attacks and skirmishes kept Naples in movement but no impression could be made on the people: Capua, Aversa, the citadel of Mondragone, besides many other places began to waver and most of the kingdom showed strong symptoms of uneasiness. Gaeta actually revolted on the sight of some of Ferdinand's galleys off the port, but was overpowered by the garrison with great slaughter and sacked as a conquered town. The Venetians in the interim had landed in Puglia and taken Monopoli and Pulignano; and four months after, Castelnuovo surrendered

after the failure of two attempts both by land and sea to relieve it: Castel dell' Uovo soon followed; the city of Nocera was subsequently recovered; and thus fortune seemed to smile once more on the Neapolitan house of Aragon *.

The Florentine republic was the only friendly power that Charles had left in Italy; a friendship, though false, in every way important and almost indispensable to France in the prosecution of her Italian conquests, but equally so to Florence as her widest and richest field of commerce. Yet so far from trying to conciliate the latter, that monarch not only broke his oath and retained her fairest possessions but left his wildest soldiers to protect her revolted subjects: his Gascon infantry when unchecked by the royal presence and imbued with all the Pisan hatred of Florence, carried on their warlike operations in a spirit of barbarity as yet unknown to the Italians. Amongst other excesses they fancied that the Florentines swallowed their gold and jewels before every encounter in order to preserve something if taken prisoners; wherefore all their suspected captives were killed and ripped open to make a thorough search for these embowelled treasures: for such cruelty however they paid full dearly when made prisoners at Ponte di Sacco, in despite of every effort of the Florentine commissaries †. This revenge was a considerable obstacle to any accommodation with Charles at Turin where the Florentine envoys were still urging their country's right to a restoration of Pisa and the minor towns; for promises, and oaths, and the sacred character of treaties were here as much disregarded as elsewhere; but the necessity for money and the demands of Naples accomplished what no sense of royal or national honour seemed likely to achieve. An order was finally obtained for the immediate restitution of Pisa and the fortresses; but with an engagement to deliver up Pietra Santa and Sarzana to the Genoese within

* J. Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 42.—Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. v°, p. 225.

† Ibid., p. 241. — Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 216.

two years, if desired by the king on receiving an equivalent from him as lord of that republic. In return for this Florence was to pay down the 30,000 florins still due by treaty, but receiving a certain amount of jewels in pawn lest any unforeseen occurrence should prevent the above-named restitution: after which they engaged to lend Charles 70,000 florins for the service of Naples on the security of the four great farmers-general of French revenues besides maintaining two hundred and fifty men-at-arms in that kingdom if Tuscany were at peace, with other conditions of a similar nature: a free pardon to the Pisans, some relaxation of their manufacturing and mercantile restrictions, and finally six Florentine hostages to insure the fulfilment of all, completed the negotiation *.

Niccolo Alamanni accompanied by Monsieur de Lille and other French envoys arrived at Florence on the seventh of September with peremptory orders to see the new treaty executed, and Leghorn was immediately restored although not without a fresh application of money: Paulo Vitelli also who was in French pay obeyed the royal command, and quickened by the same means as the governor of Leghorn joined the Florentines before Vico Pisano with all his force. They instantly raised that siege and advanced on Pisa, which was defended by an outwork under the guns of the citadel and far too strong, in the governor's opinion, for them to master; he therefore permitted the attack, but seeing the outwork carried without difficulty and the town in jeopardy he turned his own guns on the assailants, who though they still maintained the suburb saw themselves debarred by such conduct from gaining possession of the town. Entragues governor of the citadel, who was a creature of Ligny's and acting entirely under his orders, pretended to have secret instructions from Charles that had not as yet been cancelled, and being also in love with a daughter of Luca del Lanti, devoted himself with equal

* Guicciardini, Lib. ii°, cap. v.

ardour to the Pisan lady and the Pisan cause. His example was followed by the governors of Pietra Santa, Mutrone, Sarzana, and Sarzanella; they all plainly informed the royal envoy who summoned them, that in despite of the king's command, unless confirmed by orders from Ligny, they would still retain their charge; nor had the public proclamation by order of Monsieur de Lille the royal commissioner and two of his colleagues any more effect on Entragues, although it declared that unless Pisa were restored within four-and-twenty hours he should be proclaimed a rebel and an enemy to the crown of France. Fresh ambassadors were despatched to France and fresh messengers arrived, but with as little success; for Entragues either made desperate by his own disobedience, or bound by Ligny's influence, or aware all along of Charles's insincerity, still remained obstinate, while the Duke of Milan was through his agent Fracassa increasing the difficulty by secretly working amongst the citizens on his own account *.

Meanwhile these strange doings were noised abroad and roused up the hopes of Piero de' Medici who hovering like a bird of ill omen on the frontier, expected with the aid of the Orsini and Baglioni, the Bentivogli and Lodovico Sforza, to make some impression on Florence while perplexed with the war and enmity of Pisa Lucca and Siena. Bentivoglio refused to act against Florence, and Lodovico denied any assistance to the Cardinal of Medici; but the Orsini passed into Val-di-Chiana with a considerable force and had some skirmishing with the Florentines near Cortona. They were soon however engaged in the pay of France and despatched southward to oppose the Colonna who had joined Ferdinand, while Florence again set a high price on the head of Piero and Giuliano de' Medici which sent the former to Rome and the latter to Milan for greater security †.

In Tuscany the war languished a while, for Pisa was at first

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvi., p. 218. † Ibid.

too weak for offensive movements, and Florence always hoping to succeed by treaty did not put forth any immediate vigour until after Entragues had sold the citadel to the people who razed it to the ground; until he had sold Sarzana and Sarzanella to Genoa; Pietra Santa and Mutrone to Lucca; and until every complaint or remonstrance was treated by Charles VIII. with equal duplicity and contempt. Meantime the Pisans despatched ambassadors to the Pope, the Emperor, Venice, Milan, Genoa, Lucca, Siena, and other smaller states demanding aid and protection; and from all received assurances of goodwill and aid of some sort; but from Venice and Milan immediate succours, so that after various fortune they became superior in the field, wherefore Ercole Bentivoglio the Florentine general (son to that Santi already mentioned) was compelled to entrench himself in a strong position between the castle of Pontadera and its river and confine his operations to a mere checking of the enemy's movements*.

Reënforcements of Stradiotes from Venice and Germans from the emperor swelled the Pisan ranks, and no war more cruel was ever made than that now waged by these Greek auxiliaries between Pisa and the Florentines. The report of Charles VIII. being about to revisit Italy with three great armies, under himself, the Duke of Orleans, and Gian-Giacopo Trivulzio so alarmed Lodovico that he invited Maximilian to cross the Alps: this prince accordingly arrived at Genoa in October and reaching Pisa about the beginning of November trifled away two months in debating how to carry on the war against Florence; he attempted to take Leghorn and failed, principally from the rains, then quarrelled with the Venetians whom he accused of insincerity, and returned, complaining and inglorious, into Germany†. Lodovico and the Venetians were each personally in-

* Malipiero, Annali Veneti, p. 436.—Arch. Stor., vol. vii.—Guicciardini, Lib. iii°, cap. i°, p. 7.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., pp. 228-230.

† Ammirato, p. 236.—Guicciardini, Lib. iii., cap. iv., p. 81.—Cagnola, Storia di Milano, Lib. ix., p. 207, who speaks somewhat more favourably of

terested in the defence of Pisa, not from any sympathetic or generous feeling, but because both were eager to possess it: seeing each other's objects they soon clashed, and the former who notwithstanding his aid to Pisa always maintained an amicable intercourse with Florence, now exhibited more unequivocal signs of friendship by intimating that he wished to restore Pisa to Florentine dominion *.

Thus thwarted Venice began to repent of her interference, and instead of a subject, resolved to maintain Pisa as a free city through hate of the Florentines, so that the war was still continued by a series of petty encounters skirmishes and insignificant sieges; in one of which, that of Soiano, Piero Capponi fell; shot through the head as he pointed a cannon at the walls and thus was inflicted a far deeper injury on his country than the capture of a dozen such places could repair †. Hostilities proceeded with various fortune but unmitigated barbarity and constant loss to Florence until the end of April 1497, when a truce for five months was suddenly made between France and Spain in which the allies of both were included, so that the hands of Florence remained shackled while all her war expenses were necessarily continued and her army lay idle ‡.

During these transactions Ferdinand pursuing a glorious career of victory had recovered nearly all his kingdom, Tarento

the emperor.—Ricordi di Ser Perizolo, p. 393, vol. vi., Parte ii., Ar. Stor. Ital.—Foscari, Dispacci, Lib. xxxi., et seq., vol. vii., Ar. Stor. It.—Bembo, Histo. Vinit., Lib. iii°, fol. 31-42, et seq.

* Guicciardini, Lib. iii., cap. iv., p. 238. Malipiero says that Lodovico secretly offered before this to assist Florence if she would continue the subsidy of 60,000 florins that she had paid to his brother Galeazzo, and that Florence alarmed by the interference of Venice consented; but Lodovico's conduct showed that it could never have been put into execution at the moment, although this sudden quarrel would seem to countenance such an agreement which however I do not find mentioned by any Florentine author although allusions to some secret intercourse are occasionally made.

† Malipiero, Ann. Veneti, p. 439-40. —Guicciardini, Lib. iii., cap. iv., p. 75.

‡ Malipiero, Annali Veneti, vol. vii., p. 438. Arch. Stor. Ital.—Guicciardini, Lib. iii., cap. vi°, p. 102.—Pietro Bembo, Hist. Vin., Lib. iv°, folio 44.

and Gaeta being almost the only places in the enemy's possession, when he died after a short illness on the eighth of October 1496, with the universal reputation of an able and excellent prince. He was succeeded by his uncle Don Frederic with even more satisfaction to the nation than what Ferdinand's restoration produced because the latter was beloved for extreme mildness and amiability, while Ferdinand on the contrary was strongly suspected of an intention to persecute the whole French party when he had completely established his own authority, but Frederic immediately conciliated every faction by a prompt restoration of all sequestered property and thus preserved his influence *.

A.D. 1497. The newly-formed constitution and moral reformation of Florence under Savonarola's auspices would probably have worked well together for public good had the existing revolutionary spirit been essentially patriotic; had it been imbued with the spirit of great principles, of correcting deep-seated and general evils produced by political misrule, and not with the narrow selfish interests of party and personal mortification. Unluckily this was not so; for amongst the chief citizens of the Medician faction revolution was mainly caused by Piero de Medici's arrogance swelled by the proud breath of the Orsini to a more inflated and presumptuous insolence. These haughty barons could ill brook their kinsman's social equality with men above whom he was in reality so much exalted, and whom they in all their Roman pride considered far beneath them. Wherefore those citizens who willingly bent to Lorenzo because he let them gain all they could (including public hatred) at the nation's cost; on seeing themselves slighted turned suddenly from Piero and endeavoured to regain lost popularity in the full expectation of some great political changes at the advent of Charles VIII. A new and gracious demeanour was adopted towards the many whom once they scarcely deigned to

* Guicciardini, Lib. iii°, cap. iii°, p. 63.

notice, and who were daily entertained by them with unmeasured abuse of Piero, and assurances of their own past efforts for public good and public liberty during the great Lorenzo's day. Well-meaning men judging of others from themselves were flattered by their condescension, and unaccustomed to any deep investigation of motives, put some faith in their words; others more penetrating were not deceived, but encouraged their alienation from the Medici in order to make a future use of their services. The union of these two political streams, although springing from different sources and tending towards distinct objects, served during their confluence to sap the authority of Piero while they floated his two cousins to a higher level; the former party because under these youths they expected to recover their lost authority; the latter because they saw, or thought they saw in them the lineal descendants of Giovanni di Bicci and all the more ancient and popular Medici uncontaminated by power and still glowing with the spirit of their ancestors.

This wide-spread popularity seems to have excited in the young men's minds an ambition to second it by their own exertions, and their disputes with Piero left no conscientious scruples on the subject. Through Lodovico the Moor they had recommended themselves to Charles VIII. and received pensions as officers of the royal household: this as we have seen ultimately led to their exile, flight, and junction with that monarch whom they endeavoured to prejudice as much as possible against Piero *.

After Charles the Eighth's departure from Florence the above faction, which had been accustomed to govern under Lorenzo, completed this revolution by nominating the twenty Accoppiatori already described, but with all the Medician spirit at that moment possible. They however as we have shown dissolved the Lorenzian councils of the "Hundred" and the "Seventy;" the "Procurators of the Palace," the

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i., p. 27.

"Otto di Pratica" and the old Accoppiatori; and fashioned the "Otto di' Guardia and Balià" more in accordance with the existing feeling; nay, more than this; they also reduced the tolls on food and produce, and even the taxes due to the community, by a fifth part; and thus gained some deserved favour with the people. On the other hand they confirmed and even increased the powers of the Seignory on purpose to attach them more strongly to the charms of a close and exclusive government, and they made Lorenzo Popolano de' Medici an accoppiatore, although under age, as the first step of exaltation to the ancient authority of his race. All this was confirmed by a people who it may be supposed after sixty years of a far more rigid despotism could not at once comprehend the full force and tendency of such measures; but having got rid of a tyrant vainly imagined that liberty was sure, when, like the shreds of a polypus, his every remnant still moved with innate vitality.

There were many that saw through all this and would have joined it too had their individual interest been more consulted: amongst these was Pagoloantonio Soderini who displeased at being excluded from the Accoppiatori and seeing no chance of raising the two popolani to supreme power, suddenly changed his politics and became the bold and successful advocate for broad democratic government *. He proposed the great council in imitation of Venice, against the opinion of Vespucci and other oligarchs, and with some as clear-sighted companions at once joined Savonarola and urged him to preach with unrelaxing vigour in favour of a liberal constitution. This produced the "*Great Council of the People;*" which considering that it averaged one deputy from less than every hundred inhabitants is probably an example of the most numerous deliberative representation of a free people that ever yet existed. Yet its legislative powers were neither exclusive nor unshackled, for it only approved and passed laws, without the privilege of initiating

* Filip. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 65.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i., p. 35.

them; but every important office of the state, not excepting the supreme executive government itself, were entirely of its own appointment; and thus the absolute sovereignty of the people over their laws and rulers was, theoretically at least, complete and uncontrolled *.

Still there was a strong aristocratic spirit pervading every institution; the lower trades shared in most public honours as a right which they had often vindicated and had long firmly established; but it was never popular with the higher classes of citizens, and even this unusually democratic council was cautious, perhaps justly so, in its choice of candidates for office from that order, by selecting only those whose wealth, industry, reputation and general knowledge had distinguished them from their fellows: so far, if fairly worked, a powerful stimulus was offered to individual merit, to industry, and general character; fair prospects were opened for the ambition of more aspiring minds, and an indirect guarantee for the preservation of order amongst the inferior citizens. All these regulations would probably have done much towards reviving a purer spirit of patriotism if they had stood on a really virtuous foundation, or rather if they had been nourished by a widespread and deep-seated morality: but the leading classes had been too long and too generally corrupted, hence after the first burst of enthusiasm was over, ambition, avarice, selfishness, faction, and ancient enmities soon recommenced their work; and we are told by Jacopo Pitti, that sound laws and regulations, financial measures, appointments of generals, levies of troops, were all thwarted and ruined by faction; nay some citizens even secretly excited and assisted the Pisans in their rebellion †.

* Thirty was the legal age for this council, but in certain circumstances twenty-five. To give the advantage to age in drawing the names, those between twenty-five and thirty-five had their names written on *one* billet only; those from thirty-five to forty-five on *two* billets; and from forty-five upwards on *three* billets: thus increasing chances with years. (Vide *Gio. Cambi*, p. 92.)

† Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 37.—Gio. Cambi, Stor., p. 98.

These things generally proceeded from the oligarchical party, who finding their objects dissolved by the spirit of the great council, they themselves become amenable to law and dependant on popular will for their official and political existence; remained in a state of sullen discontent. Nor was this from any deprivation of public honours, for they shared largely in all, but only because they could not now as formerly, misuse them for their own personal advantage. They measured honour and honesty, says Pitti, by self-interest and individual gain, and could ill brook the mortification of receiving their public appointments from those very citizens who had been accustomed to come respectfully before them not only with the humblest requests for high official employment but also to obtain the most trifling public situations. These, although old Medician partisans, at first clung exclusively together and held no connection with the *Bigi*, or (as they were also named) *Palleschi*, the most dependent and devoted of Medician followers: they hated Piero and all his house, but were favoured by Lodovico Sforza, more especially after his incipient coolness with Venice; because his protection of Pisa was a mere step towards the future acquisition of that city when he hoped by their means and the exaltation of the Popolani Medici, to gain great influence over Florence *. Lodovico's politics and those of the league had therefore been always supported by the Arrabbiati in direct opposition to the Frateschi, with whom the Bigi secretly acted as already described.

The law of appeal had greatly exalted Savonarola's reputation and spread the influence of his party; whereupon Francesco Valori, a clear-headed statesman who had been keenly watching events without any expressed opinion, at once joined the Frateschi not only from a natural bias, but as the more powerful and popular party, and soon became its most

* Guicciardini, Lib. iii°, cap. vi. p. 103.

strenuous and ablest conductor. Although the great mass of citizens was, not perfectly satisfied with this faction they strongly supported them, especially from apprehensions of the Arrabbiati or "*Ducal Faction*" (for faction gave a variety of names to every branch of political conduct in its several divisions) which with the aid of Lodovico and the league might attempt a revolution in favour of oligarchical government. Had a Milanese army once entered Tuscany it was believed that the people would have been easily persuaded by Lodovico's friends to give their hand to a prince who declared no other wish than to benefit Florence by the restitution of Pisa, an event at which he had already hinted, and simultaneously to promote the formation of a wise and steady government under the auspices of the Medici Popolani. To such a measure it was thought many would have consented from pure timidity, others because they were blinded by the delusive prospect of regaining Pisa, and many more from reawakened hopes and personal interests. Against all this the Frateschi struggled manfully and were victorious; but in revenge the Arrabbiati by a thousand arts endeavoured to ruin them in public favour: they complained of the great and continued expenses, the constant state of hostilities, the decline of trade and manufactures, which were the life-blood of Florentine prosperity: all this was true; and government was moreover borrowing at sixteen per cent. while food bore a famine price *. They asserted that the executive government had no public experience, that everything was going wrong, and such like topics, which whether true or false were as easily as they were artfully emblazoned. With all this they skilfully contrasted the long and profound tranquillity, the great profits of trade, the flourishing condition and consummate wisdom of Lorenzo's time, and all this was managed with the hope both of enticing and alarming people into a surrender of the government. They

* Gio. Cambi, p. 97.

were disappointed; but the open discontent of so large a party roused up the Bigi, and induced them to make an attempt at the restoration of Piero de' Medici to his former state *.

During this agitation Francesco Valori became gonfalonier of justice for January and February 1497, and as this was the fourth time he had enjoyed that dignity he was neither young nor inexperienced in public affairs: he was moreover accounted virtuous, and generally respected for ability, but austere in character and rigid in the exercise of authority; he went heart and hand with his party and kept their enemies in awe during his whole period of office, so that through pure apprehension of another like him successful efforts were made for the election of Bernardo del Nero a man of different stamp entirely devoted to the Medici †.

As gonfalonier, Valori's attention was more directly turned to domestic politics; to the consolidation and perfection of constitutional reform, and to the maintenance of a numerous representation against every accident. Knowing that the great council; which he considered the citadel of Florentine liberty; might be easily diminished by the operation of the Specchio and excessive taxation; by sickness, senectude, absence, and occupation in private business, so as to reduce it below one thousand sitting members, he secured this number by raising the gross amount to two thousand two hundred deputies clear of Specchio who were to be mustered thrice a year, and any deficiency supplied by unexceptionable citizens, if necessary under thirty, but always above twenty-four years of age. If these were found insufficient the blanks were to be filled even by others who were *a Specchio* from arrears of taxation, so that the whole number might be preserved complete. To those who favoured popular government such regulations were satisfactory, but violently attacked by the other factions, who insisted that

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 40.
† Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 238.— Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 41. — Gio. Cambi, p. 102.

this infusion of youthful inexperience and indiscretion could never be of any real public service. Nevertheless Valori's great wisdom and experience carried everything and at all times insured him considerable influence in Florence, for he imposed on the multitude by his lofty stature and his grave commanding air, and though already in years he was still vigorous in mind and body, and energetic in everything. On the other hand his warm support of the Frateschi had created many adversaries amongst those who were displeased with the excessive influence, authority, and severe morality of Girolamo *.

Notwithstanding Lodovico's acknowledged obligations to Venice for her powerful aid against Charles VIII. he could not tolerate the idea of her filching Pisa from his grasp which he saw was imminent in consequence of her cunning and all-pervading influence. Substituting diplomacy for force he persuaded Pope Alexander VI. and the king of Spain, both jealous of Venetian greatness, that the only way of entirely liberating Italy from French interference was to attach Florence to the league by restoring Pisa; because with separate interests she would unceasingly cling to French support, and both her riches and central position gave the power of doing infinite mischief †. After communicating with the Archbishop of Aix, then French ambassador, the Florentines by Lodovico's council sent a secret mission to Rome under Alessandro Braccesi to arrange this business; but the Venetians who wanted Pisa either free or subject, proposed such terms as were sure to be rejected and after some further negotiation the measure failed entirely through their machinations.

But although not at the price of Pisa the Venetians still wished for the adherence of Florence, and thought with Alexander that the restoration of Piero de' Medici would be the readiest way to accomplish it, looking for success to her civil discord, and distress amongst the poorer inhabitants. The new

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 238. † Guicciardini, Lib. iii., cap. vi., p. 103.

Florentine constitution was too democratic to please the higher classes; they felt themselves powerless and neglected beyond what could be patiently borne while an inexperienced multitude sat paramount at every change of magistracy; and this with infinite confusion and discontent which were both increased by seeing an undue share of office and authority distributed amongst the followers of Savonarola. All Piero's hopes were based on this constant clashing of parties coupled with the excessive suffering of great masses, from a searching famine, riots, outrages, and many thousand deaths from sheer starvation both in town and country: wherefore secretly stimulated by Venice, abetted by Alexander VI. and Cardinal Sanseverino; not discouraged by Lodovico, and invited and supplied with money by his native adherents, he managed to collect near four thousand men under Bartolomeo d' Alviano a young and enterprising follower of the Orsini, and with the concurrence of Pandolfo Petrucci proposed marching from Siena before the gonfaloniership of his friend Bernardo del Nero had terminated*.

On the twenty-eighth of April he left Siena, intending to be at Florence when the gates were opened in the morning, but detained by heavy rain at a place called Le Tavernelle he was some hours too late, and government having been duly warned everything was prepared for his reception, the new Seignory all staunch adherents of the existing constitution, having been added to the old through suspicion of Bernardo del Nero. Piero in due time appeared at the Porta Romana where he remained four hours without the slightest demonstration in his favour, and then fearing the Conte Rinuccio who had arrived with a strong detachment from the army before Pisa, he returned by private roads to Siena closely pursued by the Florentine general.

Whatever might have been the follies and errors of the Flo-

* Fran. Cei, p. 51. MS.—Ammirato, Lib. ii., p. 58.—Guicciardini, Lib. iii., Lib. xxvii., p. 239.—Jacopo Nardi, cap. vi., p. 108-109.

rentine government in other matters, they were vigilant against the return of the Medici, and besides employing Paulo Vitelli who had just arrived from captivity at Mantua, and detaining Ercole Bentivoglio whose time of service was already finished, they had commanded every citizen to arm for public defence, but such was the state of doubt and disagreement that a very few obeyed the order. Many apprehended that the principal citizens would seize the occasion offered after Piero's discomfiture to wrest all power from the people, who being without a chief and too weak to oppose them preferred to keep aloof and wait the consequences rather than begin a useless struggle. Others feared an armed conflict would take place between the Frateschi and their adversaries, and resolved on keeping neutral, expecting that the latter would conquer and usurp the government: but the greater part believing that Piero had not moved without invitation looked to his success as sure, and many wishing for it would not compromise themselves by arming to oppose him.

Fifty of the most suspected citizens had been early invited to the palace and detained there until all danger had passed, but their indignant friends and kinsmen were attending the event although no open demonstration in Piero's favour was made by any: a provisional board of eight was appointed to watch over public safety, for though the danger was evident, only in the following August was there any new and clear light thrown upon this conspiracy, by the capture of Lamberto d'Antella *. This man having been ill-used by Piero de' Medici in whose cause he had been declared a rebel, burned to revenge the wrong while he calculated on gaining pardon for himself and brother by a complete disclosure: he was arrested while proceeding to inform his brother-in-law Francesco Gualterotti by means of a letter found on his person and still existing in manuscript; as usual he was put to the torture, for no evidence, however willing might be the individual

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 42.

to give it, was deemed perfect in those fierce days without the executioner's assistance. His confession is given at length, together with the private life and opinions of Piero de' Medici, and the ultimate confessions of all whom he implicated in the manuscript Memoirs of Francesco Cei as copied from the original public documents *.

The five principal citizens accused, were Niccolo Ridolfi, Lorenzo Tornabuoni (both nearly related to Piero) Giovanni Cambi, Giannozzo Pucci, and the gonfalonier Bernardo del Nero; the latter for being cognizant of the plot without revealing it while holding that high office; the rest for a direct conspiracy to restore Piero de' Medici a declared rebel of the commonwealth. Many others of the highest families in Florence were implicated more or less, and to such an extent that the affair became of double consequence both as a question of numbers and as to the legitimate character of the popular, or the Medician rule. If the prisoners were acquitted the latter would have been virtually acknowledged and the late revolution condemned; if punished the existing order would have derived greater strength and authority from the act; and we have already seen that the people were in a timid vacillating state and almost lukewarm about the consequences.

Lamberto d'Antella was what was called a rebel of the "Otto di Guarda," that is to say, his sentence had originally been pronounced by that tribunal and therefore to the same court was he remanded for examination. They however being alarmed at the importance of the subject (so much influence had the fears of revengeful kinsmen on courts of justice) demanded aid from the Seignory who immediately ordered seven members of the

* The "*Memorie Storiche*" of Fran. Cei, are but little known and do not appear to have been ever published. He flourished in 1557, and dwells much on the subject of this conspiracy: he appears also to have been in possession of copies of the secret examinations and confessions of the conspirators, which the then existing government never published for their own justification.

Colleges and Decemvirate of Peace and Liberty, besides five "*Arroti*," or supplementary citizens, to enter on the examination. Before this began the great square was guarded by armed men, the palace itself fortified, the condottieri commanded to hold their troops in readiness, the citizens ordered not to quit the town without especial leave, and every other precaution taken to secure tranquillity. The members of this board of inquiry having thus secured themselves took a reciprocal oath not to show any respect to persons however nearly connected with them, and then ordered those accused by Lamberto to attend; but even this was done indirectly and clandestinely by means of the Seignory's officers in order to lull their suspicions. The examination having inculpated a far greater number of citizens than were at first suspected their duty became still more arduous and dangerous, and when finished the "Otto di Balìa" refused to take upon themselves any responsibility of condemnation; alleging that if legal assistance were necessary merely to imprison and torture the accused, it became infinitely more so to condemn them. The twelve supplementary judges had withdrawn after executing the commands of the Seignory, leaving what remained to the "Otto di Balìa" as the proper tribunal, and glad to escape so disagreeable and hazardous a task, on account of the high rank, numerous followers, and many kinsmen of the culprits*.

To spread the responsibility over a broader surface it was a prevalent opinion that this affair should be at once referred to the great council, before which, by virtue of the recent law of appeal, it would in all probability be ultimately carried. Those friends of the accused who were amongst the priors opposed this universal judgment for the same reason that others wished it; namely because their great following and influence could not intimidate the numerous judges; and their guilt was so palpable that an acquittal was scarcely to be expected in an

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 43.

assembly where the Frateschi were predominant. On the contrary many names would then be brought forward which had hitherto been kept secret and much individual ruin be the consequence: the gonfalonier Domenico Bartoli objected to any number of magistrates usurping the powers of the great council, as suggested by the culprits' adherents; a thing which he and the remainder of the Seignory declared would mark such judges for the vengeance of every friend and kinsman of the accused, or else provoke the public indignation against them as corrupt and perjured magistrates. This discord in the Seignory terminated in an agreement to form a council of all the chief magistracies, with the senate or Council of Eighty and other citizens, in order to implicate many persons and families in the question; and this was acquiesced in by the prisoners' adherents because they expected either to influence the smaller body on their side, or at least neutralize its proceedings so as to gain time for the receipt of supplicatory letters in their favour from France, Savoy, and other powers; or until a second attempt of Piero should save them from execution.

On the seventeenth of August were assembled the Seignory, the Colleges, all the captains of the party Guelph then in Florence, the Ten of Liberty and Peace, the Otto di Balìa, the Uffiziali di Monte, the Conservators of the Laws, the Senate of Eighty, and the "*Arroti*" or "*Richiesti*:" in all about a hundred and fifty-eight, for several were absent*. Before this solemn tribunal was read the process against the accused with their own several confessions to all Lamberto's charges; elicited by torture it is true, but not on that account less valued, and probably in this instance correct. Each member was required to give his own individual judgment on the guilt or innocence of the accused and the punishment to be inflicted: each magistracy was to make known its opinion by its foreman, and each

* Giov. Cambi, p. 111.—Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., MS., p. 100.—Pitti says 136, but Cei gives all their names and agrees with Cambi who says "*Circha* 160."

bench of the Senate in a similar manner; or according to Cambi by two members. After having retired like so many juries to determine on their verdict, Antonio di Vanni Strozzi was the first to reappear and speak as follows in the name of the sixteen Gonfaloniers of Companies *. "My honoured fathers would "rather that this duty should have fallen on others than "themselves on account of the paramount importance of the "subject, for in our days nothing more serious has ever hap- "pened; and if any persons were permitted to excuse them- "selves from such a task they would willingly have done so "because of its extreme importance; but moved by your com- "mands O most illustrious Seignors! and by that affection "which every citizen owes to his country I am now content "to pronounce their judgment. Your servants are aware that "no greater crimes exist than those committed against our "country, and therefore they are severely punished by the "laws, because every citizen owes greater obligations to his "country than to his father. And wishing, for shortness of "time, to express their opinion on this case they find, that the "statute and common law of Florence severely punish those "who sin against their country, which is the crime of high "treason, and of so grave a character that the most venial sins "become in such cases mortal, a thing unknown in common "offences. According to the tenor of our laws and common "reason, all these my fathers are of opinion that the five above- "named prisoners should die, and that their property should "be confiscated; and although in some of them this crime was "only misprision of treason, nevertheless, considering the "quality of the persons that ought to have revealed it we are "agreed in this general condemnation. No judgment is now "pronounced upon the others who are implicated, because none "has been demanded; but in a proper time and place it shall "be given: a longer time would be desirable for consultation,

* Gio. Cambi, p. 111.

"and if they deserve mercy it is the business and proper "office of the prince; and this I am perhaps saying without "the authority of my fathers; but I conclude by asserting that "justice should have its course in order to rid the city of "wicked men and keep the citizens united"*.

Nineteen others as foremen of their several juries then gave their verdicts to the same effect, wherefore baffled and alarmed those four priors who were working for the prisoners opposed fresh obstacles to the execution of the sentence; they disputed the opinion given as unfair, and demanded that in so important a trial each member should give his judgment singly. By this means they hoped to work on the weaker-minded, who having thus to record their verdict before a divided Seignory would speak ambiguously and so paralyse the judgment of the court for a season: the sentence would thus be delayed until the new Seignory for September were chosen, and this once accomplished it was believed that every one would be well contented to discharge his load on the consciences of other citizens.

The bold determined character of Francesco Valori at once discomfited them: appearing before the Seignory he called for their notary and witnesses and desired them to record and bear testimony, "that he judged the accused citizens worthy of death and confiscation of property." Others followed, and finally an order reached the Otto di Balìa to put the sentence into execution. Through the influence of Bernardo Nasi it was at first declined but subsequently carried by six votes on the seventeenth of August: this increased the confusion: Guidantonio Vespucci was called in as an advocate for the prisoners and he instantly demanded an appeal from the Seignory to the Great Council; a meeting was held on the twenty-first and the four priors who had at first avoided the appeal now desired it as the only chance for their friends; a new contest

* Fran. Cei, Mem^e. Stor., p. 95, MS.

arose which could not be concealed from the citizens; divisions were fomented; the culprits' supporters were loud in praise of the law, others condemned it as opposing an obstacle to their present wishes; papers were placarded in the great square, from the Custom-house to the Palace, urging the people to see justice executed if they regarded liberty. "*Justice O People if* "*you mean to be free; whosoever says otherwise malignantly* "*wishes to deceive you: do that justly to them which they tyran-* "*nically were trying to do to you; to the end that never more* "*may be heard in this city such cruelty and wickedness. What* "*strange thing is now come to pass O People, that the evil* "*doers are appealing against the law which has most justly con-* "*demned them! Provide for this people; punish resolutely* "*every wicked patricide, and shun tyranny, and have perpetual* "*Liberty. Let the punishment be prompt for those who wished* "*to subvert the country; chastise those who refuse to punish* "*them justly, and be ye sure that whoso favours them is a wicked* "*citizen and loves the tyrant*"*.

Such were the means used to intimidate the magistrates and inflame public feeling against the prisoners! A meeting was summoned on the twenty-first, composed of the senate and magistrates, the first as a shelter from the hatred and vengeance of the culprits' relations, which would be found in its numbers; the second to please the public generally; and before this the right of appeal was disputed. The Florentine people, it was argued, were sovereigns of all, and no citizens should be defrauded of assistance for his defence in any case, but especially for his life: it was the duty of humanity to be merciful rather than cruel; and it was unseemly in any to impose on himself the task of depriving a fellow-citizen of life, especially when of so high a rank in the commonwealth: finally the people alone had a right to judge them, and to their sentence they should be remitted.

* Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., p. 101-2.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 46.

On the other side it was argued that in times of danger law should be dispensed with; and what could be greater than the existing perils? The prisoners' friends were constantly agitating in their favour both within and without the city in connexion with public malcontents and inimical neighbours who wanted to reinstate the Medici. The Medici themselves had already assembled a large force which was continually augmenting in Romagna, and would be the more encouraged to attack Florence in proportion to its civil discord and divisions. And if when Piero de' Medici appeared before the gates the great mass of citizens was so indifferent, what would happen if they were to see in arms the whole faction of the Palleschi aided by all the friends and kinsmen of the prisoners? The meaning and intention of the law of appeal was to protect person and property from the tyranny of the Seignory and Otto di Balià whose power was concentrated and enormous; but when this appeal had been in the first instance declined by the prisoners' friends, and when with their concurrence all the principal magistracies and all the senate united with many other citizens had been made judges and unanimously condemned the accused; was that, they confidently asked, was *that* a distortion of law, an impediment to justice, or an indifference to the common good?

The party opposed to Piero had indeed reason to be alarmed at the idea of his restoration, when he declared that if ever he again entered Florence the exiles of 1434 and the massacres of 1478 would look pale in comparison to what he would inflict upon his country in order to prevent the possibility of another expulsion. The Nerli, the Capponi, the Nasi, the Gualterotti, the Bardi, Paulo Antonio Soderini and his son; the Giugnetti, Corsi, Rucellai, Scarfi, Valori, Pazzi, Albizzi, and many others were all openly doomed either wholly or in part to ruin and destruction *. The arguments against granting an

* Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., MS., p. 83.

appeal were loudly and tumultuously supported by the College of Gonfaloniers who menaced with an armed hand and their usual impetuosity, both the persons and property of any who declared against the culprits' death: the whole assembly was in an uproar; Francesco degli Albizzi cried in a loud shrill voice for justice; others tried to mitigate the general confusion, fearing that prompt severity would create evil in the excited state of parties: it was growing late; the tumult increased; the obstinacy of faction augmented, and none seemed likely to yield. At this moment Francesco Valori suddenly started up and stalking over to the Seignory seized the ballot-box, with which striking violently on their table he exclaimed in a loud, deep, and angry voice; "*Let execution be done; or evil will follow.*" Startled at this violence from such a man the gonfalonier urged his colleages to comply; on which the proposto Luca Martini declared that if he had six black beans to support him he would propose it; but on the question being put, there were found only five black and four white beans. Then started up Valori for the second time, and in severe and bitter tones demanded, "For what reason then have your lordships summoned so many citizens before you? The very persons "who only four days ago so freely and publicly, one by one, "recorded their formal opinion against those plotters of revolution, those subverters of their country, those destroyers of "public liberty? And what will be the consequence of not at "once despatching them, except a new invitation to the tyrant "who is already prepared to return in force? Do you not "perceive the inclination of so many worthy citizens? Do you "not hear the universal cry, jealous of justice and the public "safety? Do you not see the danger of delay? Recollect "that the Florentine people have placed you in that high seat "for their guard and security: to you they have confided the "great public good, which if you neglect from respect to so "perfidious an enemy, *there will not fail, there will not fail;*

"*be ye sure; to appear some who will promptly embrace a "cause so just! so holy! and to the peril of those that oppose "it!*" Then with an outstretched arm and grim aspect he offered the ballot-box to Martini and bid him put the question: the latter cowering under Valori's frown instantly obeyed, and the four recusant priors equally intimidated offered no more opposition: the death warrant was instantly despatched to the Otto de Balìa and the five condemned citizens were decapitated that very night in the court-yard of the Bargello with closed gates, even before the assembly separated. Lamberto d'Antella and his brother Alexander were pardoned and rewarded, but none of the examinations were communicated to the people: the rest of those implicated were more mildly treated, and Francesco Valori like another Cicero, gained new and extensive reputation, but also new and bitter enemies; some from mere jealousy, but many from hatred for the loss of their unfortunate kinsmen, and he lived to pay a bloody forfeit for his work *.

There was a loud and apparently an unjust outcry made against Savonarola and his party for allowing their own law to be infringed when it was likely to work in an enemy's favour: but Savonarola's law of appeal was, both in words and spirit, a protection from the abuse of power in two particular courts expressly named, and not from so numerous and solemn an assembly as the Senate and a general union of the higher magistracies of the Florentine Republic, of which those two tribunals only formed a small portion. The guilt of the conspirators was clear and their punishment just; they had committed high treason against the state: they might have been pardoned although at the moment it would have been dan-

* Guicciardini, Lib. iii°, cap. vi., p. 109.—Lettera di Lamberto dell' Antella, MS.—Fran. Cei, p. 101, MS.—Giov. Cambi, p. 111-13.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 45.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 243.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 67.—Fil. Nerli, Lib. iii., p. 72.—Macchiavelli, pp. 57, 82, Frammenti, Ist.

gerous; but the granting of an appeal which no law sanctioned, would after trial by such an assembly have been a mockery of all law. Savonarola himself seems undeserving of any blame, he had repeatedly declared from the pulpit that he never did nor ever would interfere in the details of government or himself attempt or recommend any man to alter the course of justice. "I wish none of you" (he says in a sermon to the Grand Council in 1496), "I wish none of you to be under any "obligation to me. * * * I wish to be free. I wish to "tell you of this, but you will not believe it: you write abroad "that I interfere in the affairs of state: you know it to be "false: I only address you in general terms about good laws, "and good manners, but with the administration of your state "I do not trouble myself. Do this then: let your first object "be to make yourselves good Christians"*.

The Frateschi however gained a considerable increase of power by their success, and medals were struck with Savonarola's image on one side and on the other that of Rome; over which a hand and dagger were suspended, and the legend "*Gladius domini super terram cito et velociter.*"

These events threw his adversaries more than ever into Lodovico's hands who always desirous of establishing his influence in Florence by the formation of an oligarchical government, had at the request of this party as far back as 1495, procured a brief against Savonarola's preaching. This was attacked by the friar who not only justified himself but was justified by the Florentine government and the excellent consequences of his preaching made manifest; so that Alexander who was then little interested did not press the subject until other circumstances revived it. The asserted illegal condemnation of the five citizens, who from age, rank, and character, were pitied by many even amongst the ascendant faction; for all their relations were friendly and they had them of every

* *Vide*, Storia di Savonarola, p. 204.

party: the Frate's enemies also though not of the Palleschi: either from a wish to maintain the right of appeal in every case or from personal affection for the culprits, had stood forward boldly in their defence and though unsuccessful battled to the last against the deed. This generous conduct was not lost upon the Bigi who had hitherto supported the Frateschi with their secret votes, but now seeing their own chiefs so hardly used they threw all their weight into the opposite scale, and the result was a far greater share of official power for themselves and the Arrabbiati, as well as more deference to the papal censures on Savonarola which had hitherto been softened, or entirely disregarded by the government *.

Pope Alexander VI. who had first despised Savonarola became in the course of time incensed against him and even fearful of his influence extending itself beyond the walls of Florence: Girolamo's preaching had already been interdicted; nay he was excommunicated on the eighteenth of June in every Florentine church and his adherents were included in the censure. But the monk strong in his divine mission and mundane support declared this anathema unjust and therefore of no effect; his adherents disregarded it and even took up arms in his defence; for as he truly asserted, the church of God had need of reform and would be chastised in its iniquity †.

Savonarola's censures were too just not to be felt by Alexander VI. who however was for a long time rather excited against him by others than personally inclined to interfere except in political matters, for he would willingly have had any other government in Florence. The Duke of Candia one of the pope's sons had just been murdered by his brother the cardinal Cæsar Borgia, partly from rivalry in a licentious and unnatural connection with their own sister Lucrezia which their common father the pope is suspected of having shared; and partly from jealousy of his brother's military talents and

* Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 73. † Vita di Savonarola, cap. xxii., p. 75.

appointments which interfered with his own ambition. The pope's mistress too, Giulia Farnese who was called "La Giulia Bella" and conspicuously nay even ostentatiously exhibited at all the great religious festivals, had increased the public scandal by producing another son to occupy the place of him whose blood had so lately reddened the hand of the fratricide. These things had sharpened the edge of and reënforced Savonarola's censures, but he had obeyed the papal prohibition against his preaching, by putting the Fra Domenico Bonvicini of Pescia in his place, a man equal in enthusiasm if not in talents and eloquence to Girolamo himself. Had the latter remained silent it is probable that a reconciliation with Rome would have followed; but invited and urged by the government he recommenced preaching in February 1498, celebrating mass and resuming all his ecclesiastical functions, in despite of every prohibition to the contrary *. Savonarola's enemies, secure in the countenance of Rome, had in 1497 worried him even in his pulpit with great indecency both in words and actions; they befouled his seat with every sort of ordure and placed a stuffed ass in the pulpit of the cathedral when he went to preach; even one of the magistrates attempted to drag him from it but was beaten off by the people, and Francesco Cei and other young Florentines created such a hubbub in the church that he was compelled to cease and for a while abstain from preaching †. A.D. 1498.

In the beginning of 1498, political negotiations recommenced with Rome but only elicited a promise of the restitution of Pisa on condition of Florence joining the league; the latter seeing no prospect of such a result in opposition to the will and power of Venice, and the certainty of herself becoming an enemy of France with infinite danger to commerce, would not consent, and therefore incurred the further anger and suspicions of the pontiff. The Florentines immediately engaged Paulo

* Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., p. 109, MS.—Storia di Savonarola, p. 276.
† Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 241.

Vitelli in their service but did not discontinue their intercourse with Alexander who every day became more indignant against Savonarola. This gave new courage to his enemies and inflamed the sectarian enmity between the Dominicans and Franciscans; the former as supporters of their prior, the latter as zealous partisans of papal authority; so that the churches of San Marco and Santa Croce resounded with their altercations.

Fra Domenico di Pescia offered in his zeal, to prove the truth and heavenly inspiration of Savonarola's doctrine, by the fiery ordeal if necessary: the adverse order seriously took up this gauntlet and the Fra Francesco di Puglia at first devoted himself, but repented and was replaced by the more courageous Niccolò de' Pilli a Florentine: he too thought better of it and was succeeded by Fra Bartolommeo Rondinelli who boldly offered himself as a victim in order to remove such an impostor as Savonarola from the world*. Savonarola's congregations were more numerous than ever; he had previously to recommencing walked in solemn procession round Saint Mark's church and published his apology for disregarding the pope's censures in a work called the "Triumph of the Cross." The Archbishop of Florence's vicar Lionardo de' Medici threatened pains and penalties against any that attended his sermons, but the first Seignory of 1498 silenced this officious underling by an order to resign his office at two hours' notice on pain of rebellion†.

In 1494 and 1495 Savonarola had assembled about thirteen hundred children from eighteen years of age downwards; principally those whom he had weaned from the dangerous pastime of the "*Potenze*;" and after having confirmed all that were old enough, sent them in white dresses with red crosses in their hands in procession round Florence. They were then

* Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 76.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 73.—Pignotti, Lib. v., cap. ii., p. 83.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 245.—Nardi says that the defiance came from Francesco di Puglia; Nerli that Domenico was the challenger: the folly may be divided between them without envy or diminution of measure.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 69.

ordered to beg at every house for what he denominated the "*Anathema*" or things excommunicated and cursed of God: these consisted of every sort of lascivious picture or book; of female ornaments, false hair, odoriferous waters, cosmetics, perfumes of every kind, chessmen, cards, dice, harps, lutes guitars and all sorts of musical instruments; Boccaccio's works, the Morgante, superstitious and magical books in abundance; Ovid's Art of Love, Catullus, Juvenal and every reprehensible production ancient or modern, of which there was a marvellous quantity. These were piled up in the form of a very broad-based pyramid before the public palace where the whole population assembled on the last day of the Carnival to see them burn; and where they not long after assembled to see their great prophet himself at the stake by a decree of the very multitude that now worshipped him*! Although this was effected under Savonarola's influence, Domenico da Pescia's enthusiastic preaching became the immediate instrument of so strange a reform, by which in fact many valuable manuscripts and works of art are said to have perished; even the famous Baccio della Porta better known as the painter Fra Bartolommeo was hurried away from his "seducing art;" as he called it; and in one of these exciting spectacles cast his designs, paintings, and every implement of his profession into the flames, and took the habit of Saint Domenico†.

These shows were accompanied by religious dances in which Savonarola himself and all his fraternity joined with enthusiastic excitement uttering the party cry of "*Viva Cristo.*" Pignotti says that he and his religious brethren sometimes issued from Saint Mark's Convent during the Carnival and joining hands with their lay followers, alternately posted, danced round in a wide circle with loud impassioned shouts of "*Viva Cristo,*" declaring it a glorious thing to become frantic for the Saviour's sake. And as it was then the custom to

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii. p. 56. † Vasari, Vita di Fra. Bartolommeo.

unite the dance and song, Girolamo Benivieni one of the most distinguished poets of the time and devoted to Savonarola, did not disdain to occupy his Muse in assisting these well-meaning but extravagant exhibitions. Well-meaning, because the whole tenor of Savonarola's life, his perfect disinterestedness; his simple, frugal, laborious, and religious manners, and his final sacrifice of life for his principles, prove his sincerity. His refusal of a cardinal's hat shows a total absence of worldly ambition; for a cardinal in those days was a prince of great power besides being a step to the popedom; and there moreover seems good reason to believe that by these religious excitements, he wished to divert the public mind from the more reprehensible and licentious pleasures of the Carnival as then practised, by simply creating another excitement; as doctors cure by creating a counter irritation *.

The pope by a new brief again imposed silence on Savonarola, and under pain of a national interdict and confiscation of their property at Rome ordered the Florentines to see it executed. As an intelligible menace of hostile invasion accompanied these commands the government dared not in its weak discordant and unsettled state any longer disobey, and on the eighteenth of March 1498, Savonarola preached his last sermon wherein he boldly and fiercely attacked the sins of the clergy and menaced both Rome and Florence with coming misfortunes; Christ alone, he said, should now be looked to as the universal head, since no amendment or reformation was to be found in the church itself. These and similar expressions thundered from the pulpit and exaggerated at Rome were the principal occasion of all the subsequent troubles both there and at Florence connected with this extraordinary man †.

The pope's anger was artfully kept up by Fra Mariano di Ghinazzano, the Frate's old and implacable antagonist under

* Storia di Savonarola, Lib. iv°, p. 281.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 56-71. —Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., pp. 71-75.—Pignotti, Stor. di Tos., Lib. v., cap. ii°.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 72.

Lorenzo's auspices: this priest was now General of the Augustines and conjured the pontiff in a public sermon to "*Take away this monster of the Church and of God, and burn the instrument of Hell*"*. Under his authority Francesco di Puglia had been sent to preach against Savonarola, who declaring as is said, that he had heard the latter would prove his doctrines by a miracle and had challenged his adversaries to raise the dead; asserted in reply that it would be presumptuous in him to attempt such things, but either gave or accepted the challenge of fire, knowing he would perish, but being content to burn with Savonarola if he were false, or without him in proof of God's truth, should the Frate escape†. This conduct was highly approved of by Alexander VI. who thus addresses the monks of Saint Francis. "To humble and confound the per-
" tinacity of Fra Girolamo there have not been wanting those
" amongst you who have proposed to throw themselves into
" the flames. It is our duty highly to commend this your
" devotion and promptness in a work so pious, so useful, so
" praiseworthy, that it never can be obliterated from the
" memory of mortals and which to this Holy See and to us
" is so grateful and acceptable that nothing can give greater
" satisfaction."

Savonarola himself in preaching alluded incidentally to the subject of this folly and implored the prayers of his auditors if the trial should ever take place: he was instantly stopped by loud and eager cries of "*Ecce ego, Ecce ego transibo per ignem.*" But he checked their ardour by asserting "that he
" had neither proposed nor accepted this proof, although it had
" been many times proposed by his adversaries; and that
" whoever might be by the Almighty elected to enter the fire
" and whoever might be sent to the proof, he would without
" doubt through God's help come out uninjured from the

* Ferd°. del Migliore, Fir. Illustrata, (*San Marco.*)
† Storia di Savonarola, p. 283.—Vita di Savonarola, Lib. iv., cap. xxiii., p. 283.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 71.

"flames; and if he believed otherwise he never would place "anybody in such peril or himself in danger of being the "destroyer of his own loving and affectionate children."— "What astounds me" says Muratori "is that this terrible proof not having been made use of for some centuries should finally be proposed by men of priestly character at Florence in the end of the fifteenth century, and that Girolamo Savonarola, a man no less celebrated for his piety than his learning, consented to it" *.

When we see such follies as these; attempts as it were to force Heaven into the performance of a miracle, only to suit our own caprice; and when we see them approved and applauded by the pontiff; proposed and accepted by learned ecclesiastics; sanctioned by the magistrates; and loudly hailed by the citizens; it seems evident that the barbarity and superstition of the middle ages; at least in religious matters; still clouded the brighter epochs of Raffaello and Michael Angelo, of Machiavelli, Lorenzo de' Medici, and Guicciardini.

Although Savonarola's refusal and discouragement of the trial proves that he was not completely blinded by his own enthusiasm and therefore had no confidence in but endeavoured to prevent the experiment, it was not so amongst his followers, who even to the women and children were ready to enter the flames, confident that through his sanctity they would come out uninjured like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. The Seignory however and many citizens wishing to end these disputes confined the trial to Domenico da Pescia and Andrea Rondinelli, a lay brother, for Francesco di Puglia very wisely declined entering the flames with any other than the great heretic whom he wanted to destroy †.

* Fran. Cei, p. 110-11, MS.—Storia di Savonarola, Lib. iv., p. 288.—Muratori, Antichità d'Italia, Diss. xxxviii., p. 213.

† Guicciardini, Lib. iii., cap. vi., p. 121.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iiº, p. 73-4. —Giov. Canacci in the debate upon the propriety of allowing the fiery

After some days spent in discussion a board of ten, five for each party was ordered to settle all disputes and arrange everything for the ceremony, and on the seventh of April 1498 the great square of the palace was lined with armed men and crowded with citizens. A scaffolding five feet from the ground, ten feet broad and eighty long, extending from the corner of the Ringhiera toward the "Tetto de' Pisani" was seen flanked on each side by a thick wall of dry wood and other combustibles piled on a foundation of solid earth and unbaked bricks, so as to resist any degree of heat; and through the centre there was a foot-path, less than two feet wide, by which the expected martyrs were to pass between the burning piles*.

This formidable apparatus showed that the government and people were in good earnest, and no doubt produced its full effect both on the long line of Franciscan friars who silently and unostentatiously escorted their champion to the lodge destined for his reception, as well as on the more pompous procession of Savonarola, who came in priestly raiment holding the sacred Host in his hand. By his side was the Fra Domenico similarly attired but carrying a crucifix, followed by a dark procession of friars, all bearing red crosses, and accompanied by a multitude of noble and other citizens with lighted torches in honour of the sacrament. The Dominicans sang hymns: the Franciscans preserved their taciturnity. The latter objected to the adverse champion being attired in the priestly robes for fear of enchantment, so he was stripped and re-clothed: he wished to enter with the sacrament in hand, but this also was denied him because as they declared, it would infallibly be consumed and produce scandal in the minds of weak and ignorant people†.

After much discussion, "with great shame to the clergy,"

ordeal, proposed that they should both be placed together in a butt of tepid water and whoever came out dry should be considered the true man. (Vide, *Nerli*, Lib. iv., p. 77.)

* Giov. Cambi, p. 115.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 74.

† Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., p. 111, MS.

says Nardi, who was an eye-witness, "as if this were a secular and profane combat and not one of our faith and depending on divine judgment," most of the day being gone and everybody still in suspense, there suddenly and unexpectedly fell a deluge of rain*, which, as the weather had been perfectly fine, was taken for a proof of Heaven's displeasure: upon this the assembly was dismissed, to the great dissatisfaction of an immense multitude that filled every corner and housetop all eager either for the success or failure of Savonarola's pretensions†. It was no subject of mirth; that shower quenched both the people's enthusiasm and the prophet's fire, and destroyed his influence: the citizens sullenly retired, each variously interpreting the events of the day, but all scandalised and confused. A change seemed to have suddenly come over their spirit; the Franciscans had already gone, and Savonarola was also making his way to Saint Mark's when the disappointed crowd became so unruly that the sacrament alone protected him from violence. Instantly ascending the pulpit he gave an account of all that had occurred, but his discourse had no effect and every citizen retired that evening to his house ill-satisfied, with all parties; for not only Savonarola's enemies but his most devoted adherents wished him and Fra Domenico to have proved their faith by passing through the flames, whether followed or not by the Franciscan. The confidence of many was gone; they felt themselves duped; their enthusiasm was spent; it had swelled too high and now collapsed; they became sulky, ready for mischief, and still further excited by every priest, monk, and pestilent citizen of the adverse party.

Public aversion increased so much against all those known to attend Savonarola's preaching or who believed his prophecies, that they could scarcely show themselves in the streets without being insulted with the epithets of "*Piagnoni*," "*Excommunicated*,"

* This fact is unnoticed by Gio. Cambi.

† Giov. Cambi, pp. 117.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., pp. 74-5.

"*Hypocrites*" and "*Mockers.*" These signs were not lost upon so acute an observer as Savonarola: he saw that his hour was come and on Palm Sunday preached a short, earnest, and pathetic sermon, in which he almost announced his approaching ruin; offered himself as a sacrifice to God, and declared his readiness to die for his flock; then pronouncing his benediction he departed with much emotion from his auditors; but firm throughout and equal to himself *. Piero Popoleschi the gonfalonier, with five of the Seignory for March and April, were enemies to Savonarola and numbers of noble citizens still burned with indignation for the sacrifice of last year's victims, so that they moved heaven and earth to inflame the discontent against him: their turn of triumph was now come, and success was certain.

Both parties began to arm; the palace was soon encompassed by a crowd of angry citizens and the entrances to the great square were guarded, by two adverse factions: this gave confidence to the Seignory who being strongly urged exhorted the preposto Lanfredino Laufredini, a staunch adherent of Savonarola, to propose that under the penalty of rebellion he should within twelve hours quit the Florentine state; this was instantly notified to him at Saint Mark's where he was consulting with Francesco Valori, Giovambattista Ridolfi, and many other citizens. The latter were advised to arm, especially Valori, against whom his own private enemies were more particularly exciting the multitude; he fled and by a circuitous route regained his own house in safety, but the tide of anger rolled after him.

Jacopo de' Nerli, Alfonso Strozzi the Compagnacci and all Savonarola's enemies were now in arms: Luca degli Albizzi also urged Salviati, Valori, and their friends to arm and defend themselves but in vain, and therefore fled himself to the Casentino. Next day being Palm Sunday almost all the principal Frateschi had escaped or were concealed, so that a

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 76.

clear field remained for Savonarola's enemies to complete his destruction: a tumult alone was necessary and that became under existing feelings of easy accomplishment. In the middle of an evening sermon preached by Mariano degli Ughi one of Savonarola's friends, the cry of "*To arms*" "*To Saint Mark's*," echoed through the cathedral, and instantly an armed crowd led by the Compagnacci rushed towards that convent in several divisions, as previously settled, calling on all the citizens to arm Savonarola was not undefended and his monks were staunch; a number of armed followers had flocked to his aid; the church was filled with defenceless people, women and children; the gates were shut and the fight began. The Seignory too had sent their guard to storm Saint Mark's and take the friar, commanding all strangers to withdraw on pain of rebellion: this mandate was obeyed and Savonarola would have issued out along with them to certain destruction if the monks had not compelled him to remain. Many citizens had made their escape by the garden before the tumult commenced, and amongst them Francesco Valori, whose house was soon attacked by the multitude.

The Seignory had already sent to secure his person and prevent violence yet none would venture to guarantee his safety as far as the public palace, and he was ultimately confided to the care of Girolamo Gori, a member of the colleges, and two mace-bearers of the Seignory, but while on his way and preceded by torches, Vincenzio Ridolfi met and killed him with one blow of a partisan. Before quitting home Valori had seen his wife shot through the head with an arrow as she was imploring the people's mercy, and his house along with that of Andrea Cambini, was plundered and burned without remorse by a band of furious enemies. The Seignory had they been sincere might have prevented all tumult, but they winked at every outrage, never even vindicating their insulted dignity by punishing Ridolfi for murdering a man under the safeguard

of one of the highest magistrates and their own municipal officers *.

Meanwhile the doors of Saint Mark's convent were destroyed by fire, and after a hard contest and some bloodshed it capitulated: Savonarola and Domenico Bonvicini were instantly led prisoners to the palace and Salvestro Maruffi another zealous adherent followed them the next morning. The ascendant faction lost no time in filling every office with their friends; government suddenly changed hands, and with it the manners and morality of Florence which Savonarola had so long maintained in decency. Then came one of those dangerous reactions so sure to attend an over-strict religious life, when pushed to the extreme either in the mass or individual, if based on passion instead of principle: vice of every sort was again openly practised as if to prove that the people were no longer hypocrites, and virtue, say the cotemporary writers, seemed as if forbidden by law to be countenanced †.

Savonarola after suffering the most disgraceful insults on his way to the palace was within a few days examined by a numerous committee of his bitterest enemies, at first verbally but with the threat of torture which was to be increased to intensity if he did not speak the whole truth and prove in something more than words that his preaching was dictated by the spirit of prophecy ‡.

During the first day he remonstrated against the impiety of tempting God by unreasonable demands and cruel menaces: the next his examiners, but with considerable fear and doubt,

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 246.—Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 79.—Gio. Cambi, p. 119.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, p. 52.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 76, et seq.

† Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 82.

‡ His examiners were Carlo Canigiani, Gio. Manetti, Gio. Canacci, Baldassare Brunetti, Piero degli Alberti, Benedetto de' Nerli, Dolfo Spini, Tommaso Antinori, Fran. degli Albizzi, Giuliano Mazzinghi, Piero Corsini, Braccio Martelli, Lorenzo Morelli, Anton. Ridolfi, Andrea Larioni and Alphonzo Strozzi. Besides Simone Rucellai and Tommaso Arnoldi; two Florentine canons also attended as papal commissioners.—(Vide *Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor.* p. 114, MS.)

decided on applying the torture, and Savonarola who had preserved all his courage and moral dignity up to this moment being of a weak and delicate fibre gave way under its influence: he wrote down whatever it pleased his tormentors, and confirmed it on the arrival of the papal commissaries Giovacchino Turriano of Venice General of the Dominicans, and Francesco Romalini a Spanish doctor of laws, who were despatched from Rome to preside at his conviction. Savonarola affirmed that he could not answer for words uttered under the torture, but in all other conditions spoke the truth: his process was formed on these confessions whether true or false; they were much doubted at the time and more so afterwards; but he underwent a second series of torment in presence of the pontifical commissioners who came because the Florentines refused to give their prisoner into papal custody; not however until the pope, according to ecclesiastical custom had prejudged and sentenced him as a heretic, a schismatic, a persecutor of the church and a seducer of the people.

Alexander VI. being in fact apprehensive of a general council by Savonarola's influence, was eager to get rid of him: he thanked the government for their zeal, demanded that the Frate should be instantly delivered up; absolved everybody who had committed any crimes connected with the late transactions; granted an indulgence which sent all to confession and repentance who under Girolamo's auspices had not paid attention to the late excommunication. Many citizens were arrested and tortured for the purpose of proving some civil crime against Savonarola, and every means that could reasonably be used was put in practice to implicate his followers two hundred of whom were dismissed abruptly from the great council by a significant personal message to each, immediately before the scrutiny*.

To new demands under new torments the unfortunate Savonarola replied that what he had preached was true both as

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, p. 79.

doctrine and prophecy, and that what he had since retracted was false, the consequence of pain, and fear of increased torture, and that he would again affirm and again retract as many times as he should be placed in the tormentor's hands, for he knew himself to be weak and irresolute in bodily suffering. He was nevertheless again put to the proof and all his contradictory assertions drawn up into a sort of process were assented to and signed by him before six of his own friars as witnesses: on this confession he was condemned in accordance with the pontiff's pre-judgment, but somewhat against the judicial customs of Florence *.

Savonarola was imprisoned for about a month before his execution, during which time, while confined in a little cell, still to be seen in the palace tower, with one small opening looking directly towards the convent of his bitterest enemies the monks of Santa Croce, he composed a commentary on the "*Miserere*" or fifty-first Psalm, a task which he had omitted in his exposition of the rest, declaring that he expressly reserved it for the period of his own tribulation. He had so intrepid a mind and so much eloquence, says Nerli, and trusted so greatly to the latter, that even when reduced to such straits, and the torture already prepared for him, he nevertheless made frequent efforts to intimidate his judges, and spoke so freely and effectually that some among them began to tremble; but all this moral courage ceded to physical weakness on the first application of torture. The public reasons given to Florence for Savonarola's condemnation were his prophecies against Rome and her licentious prelates, namely that God would soon reform the church; that for their crimes the late evils had been inflicted on Italy; and that he wished to set up a tyrant in Florence †.

His confession (against all rule) was not read in his presence as were those of his two companions; for it was feared that he would again deny the truth of what had been only extorted by

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii°, pp. 80, 81.
† Fil. Nerli, Lib. iv., p. 80.—Gio. Cambi, p. 128.

torture; but people of every rank were invited to hear it, and on this confession he was sentenced to be hanged and burned, along with his two equally enthusiastic companions Domenico da Pescia and Salvestro Maruffi *.

On the twenty-third of May 1498 a scaffolding six feet high was run out from the Ringhiera one-fourth of the way towards the "Tetto de' Pisani" at the end of which a post about twenty feet long was erected, and gathered round its foot were large piles of faggots brushwood and other combustibles with a train of gunpowder prepared to ignite the mass. Across the top of this post was nailed a transverse beam on which the criminals were to be hung in chains, but it was suddenly discovered that this gallows formed a cross, whereupon each arm was immediately sawed off as close as circumstances would permit; yet the crucial figure could never be completely destroyed, a circumstance not unnoticed by the superstitious.

The magistracy of the "Otto di Guardia e Balià" having taken their seats as a tribunal of justice on the Ringhiera the three friars were first solemnly degraded from their ecclesiastical condition by the general of their order and other prelates, and then delivered, stripped of their religious habits, into the hands of that magistracy, who instantly commanded them to be executed. Savonarola was placed in the centre between his two companions: Domenico was silent: Salvestro said, "Into thy hands O Lord I commend my spirit." And Savonarola, when the priest in the act of degradation erroneously pronounced, "I separate thee from the church militant and triumphant," calmly replied; "*From the Triumphant, No,*" but spoke no other word, and quietly proceeded to the gallows. When these three martyrs had given up the ghost fire was set to the pile and the bodies were with some difficulty reduced to ashes which were carefully collected into one mass with those of the fuel and cast into the Arno. This was to prevent any person from preserving them as

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iii., p. 81.

relics, for many still revered Savonarola as a prophet, and the Fra Domenico as immaculate; but in despite of every precaution some of their dust was collected by the soldiers and children and is said to be still occasionally exposed for adoration*.

Thus perished by the malignant spirit of faction and in the forty-sixth year of his age the celebrated Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara; "A man," says Muratori, "worthy of a better fate for his austerity of life, rare knowledge, and force, and zeal in preaching the word of God: he was of unblemished habits, of singular warmth and piety, and wholly bent on the spiritual good of the people, with other uncommon endowments indicating a true servant of God"†. We may add that he was a man of high genius and deeply versed in sacred and profane literature, not even excepting poetry and astrology, the latter of which with his friend Pico della Mirandola he is said to have studied profoundly. But his chief pursuit was religious excellence; and in this he was an intense enthusiast even to a full and perfect belief in his own inspiration: yet Savonarola's religion was not merely contemplative nor his conduct empty form: his ardent mind was devoted to philanthropy, and his opinions, based as they were on an extensive knowledge of men and things; embraced a liberal and comprehensive view of social institutions. This led him to connect in a natural and necessary union the general religious welfare of Christendom and that of Florence in particular; with the due exercise of freedom and morality in their most social and useful character. Truth and justice were his principles and he died for them. During nearly nine years of incessant labour he had preached, effected, and in a great part maintained a moral reform amongst the Florentines; but after his death it was a common saying that since the days of Mahomet no such scandal had ever disgraced Christianity as the wickedness then

* Giov. Cambi, Stor., p. 127.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 82.—Segni, Storia Fior., Lib. iº, pp. 23, 25.—Sismondi, vol. ix., p. 206.

† Muratori, Annali, Anno 1498.

rife amongst them. Insulted, reviled, and trampled upon; the Frateschi were afraid to show themselves in public, and even some of the most noble could scarcely pass through the streets without insult from the lowest of the populace*. Vice revelled in all its forms as if virtue had been prohibited by law, and no crime was held so abominable so shameful or reprehensible as that of having believed in the Frate or advocated a reform in the court of Rome. Vices of the most disgusting nature then but too common in Florence, and which Savonarola had succeeded in stifling by his religious influence and the penalties of stake and faggot, now revived in all the filth of their unnatural character, and again poisoned society as they had done in the time and with the example of Piero de' Medici †.

In politics Savonarola seems to have confined himself to the broad questions of constitutional and legislative reform, with the internal union of the commonwealth, and not to have meddled with the details or intrigues of party government except in procuring a general amnesty and saving the life of a condemned citizen belonging to an adverse party. His great work, after the formation of the popular council, was the Law of Appeal, the breach of which he has been unfairly accused of permitting when in fact it never was really violated ‡.

Of his infamous sentence there can scarcely in these days be two opinions; but that his confession, independent of its forced nature by what was called "gentle torture," was garbled for the purpose of procuring an unjust condemnation is proved by several circumstances. Nardi, who although an impartial writer was no adherent of Savonarola's, tells us at the end of his second book, how he is compelled for truth and conscience' sake, to acknowledge that a great and noble citizen, who had been one of the Frate's examiners and was appointed on account of his intense hatred, having been subsequently banished to his

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 82.

† Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 83.—Confessione di Lamberto d' Antella, apud Fran. Cei, Mem. Storiche, MS., p. 77.

‡ Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 84.

villa, was there questioned by the historian himself about Savonarola's confession and process; to which he answered in his wife's presence "It is true that from the Fra Girolamo's con- "fession certain things were omitted with the best intentions, "and others added" *.

Giovanni Berlingheri also, who was one of the priors for March and April 1498, is said by Lorenzo Viole, a cotemporary writer, to have preserved the original autograph confession of Savonarola which Viole saw in part, compared it with the printed copies then in everybody's hands, and finally declared that "*they differed as much as day and night.*" "The truth was not written," he adds, "in these printed documents; but that only was inserted which they required to prove the Frate a wicked man for the purpose of concealing their own injustice who had condemned an innocent one." There were not wanting some worthy people before and after Savonarola's death who endeavoured to persuade Berlingheri to publish this document but in vain; and even on his death-bed when his near relations Alessandro Pucci and his wife Donna Maria Sibilla implored him to give them the manuscript, he answered; "Neither "to you nor to any person in the world will I show it, for my "doing so might occasion the death of more than forty Florentine "citizens and God forbid that I should cause so much evil: have "patience, for it would not be well that I should do this; may "before I die, I wish to cast it into the flames and see it burn."

Other actors in this tragedy and one a most important personage, Ser Francesco di Barone a public notary, commonly called at the time, "*Ser Ceccone,*" who was believed to be the suggester and fabricator of the false process, is said to have confessed to Lucrezia de' Medici (Salviati) Leo the Tenth's sister "that Savonarola was a saint of Heaven but that it be- "came necessary to impute crimes to him and feign many "things in order to secure his condemnation" †. Guicciardini;

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. ii., p. 87.

† Storia di Savonarola, Lib. iv., pp. 337-8-9 and 317.

certainly no believer in Savonarola's divine mission; at the end of his third book renders this testimony, "Which death he bore with a constant mind, and without uttering a single word that implied either guilt or innocence: the various opinions and passions of men were unextinguished, for many believed him an impostor; many on the contrary believed either that the published confession was a forgery or that the force of torture had more influence on his delicate frame than the force of truth." Finally Magliabechi, a great authority and nearer our own times, exhibited proofs to his friends of the spurious process, which according to Varchi was by the proposto Lorenzo Ridolfi subsequently expunged from the public records as disgraceful, unjust, and against every rule of equity *.

Savonarola had constantly persisted in holding up Charles VIII. as a divine instrument for the emancipation of Italy from tyrants, and corruption in ecclesiastical government; and had never ceased threatening him with Heaven's vengeance for leaving such a mission unfulfilled: the loss of two infant sons in succession was indicated by many, and almost believed by Philip de Comines as the commencement of this wrath; and his own sudden death in one of the most filthy corners of Amboise Castle, on the very day intended for the fiery ordeal at Florence, confirmed it in the opinion of many †.

He was succeeded by the Duke of Orleans under the name of Louis XII., a man of moderate talents whose father had been made prisoner at Agincourt and was himself of that restless character that often makes princes feel the hardships if not the uses of adversity, and generally without profit. Louis XII. was grandson to that Duke of Orleans brother of Charles IV. who married Valentina daughter of Giovan-Galeazzo Visconte: the latter, as was averred, besides giving the city of Asti and a large portion in money, had declared in the marriage contract

* Storia di Savonarola, Lib. iv., p. 337.

† Gio. Cambi, p. 122.—Phil. de Comines, Lib. viii., cap. xviii., p. 579.

that she and her posterity should succeed to the Milanese dominions if the male line of princes became extinct. This although considered invalid by itself, was as the king asserted, confirmed by pontifical authority during the imperial vacancy; for the popes in those days assuming a power founded on laws of their own invention, claimed the superior right of administering a vacant empire *. To his French titles Louis therefore added that of Duke of Milan, as well as King of both Sicilies and Jerusalem, and declared that he intended to sustain them all by the sword. This was sufficient to alarm not only Milan but all the potentates of Italy, yet the state of this country was now so changed that some even wished for his advent, and to Milan and Naples alone did it seem formidable because each of the others expected to advance its own interests entirely reckless of the general good.

The Pisan war was a great fire in the midst of Tuscany to which every Italian state carried its fuel according to imagined interests or local jealousy, and Florence unsuccessfully endeavoured to quench the flame: Lodovico had overreached himself in thinking to reap the fruits of his assistance to Pisa by uniting Venice in the enterprise, and the Venetians, who had spent 150,000 ducats in this war, complained of this man's conduct whom they had twice saved from destruction. Florence was nearly ruined by the long and expensive conflict which she waged, not against Pisa alone, for individually the Pisans were too weak even with all their undaunted spirit, to have stood a moment, but against almost every state of Italy†. After having surprised and nearly defeated a strong Venetian detachment under Jacopo Savorgnano, the Florentine army commanded by Count Rinuccio di Marciano was suddenly attacked in rear and completely routed, as some say while in the act of

* Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. i°, vol. ii., p. 125.

† Malipiero, Annali Veneti, p. 482.—Bembo, Stor. Ven., Lib. iv., fol. 46, &c.—Guicciardini, Lib. iii°, cap. iv°. *passim.*

plundering its captives, by Tommaso Zeno near San Regolo*. This damaged their cause but induced Lodovico from pure jealousy of Venice to support them with troops and money; for between Florence and Pisa he wanted no reconciliation which was likely to give Venice a hold on the latter: Florence gave the supreme command to Paulo Vitelli of Città di Castello, an able and ambitious general who had learned much in the French service and was in fact a condottiere of that crown; but in order to soothe Rinuccio who had a strong party of relations and adherents in Florence he was made governor of the province with an augmented army†. Lodovico exerted himself to prevent any Venetian succours reaching Pisa, by refusing a free passage through his dominions, and persuaded his niece Caterina Sforza who still governed Forlì and Imola and was strongly attached to Florence, as well as Bentivoglio of Bologna and the republic of Lucca, to follow this example; while Florence at the same time but with some difficulty, and not without a slight exhibition of force in Pandolfo Petrucci's favour, enabled him to force the Senese into a five years' truce‡. All communication except on the side of Genoa was thus cut off from the Pisans, but Venice was not disposed to abandon them, for accompanied by both the Medici and after an unsuccessful attempt to force the strong defile of Marradi, whose fortress of Castiglione was gallantly defended by Dionigi di Naldo, their troops retired in disorder and the more quickly from hearing that the Count of Caiazzo and his brother Fracasso of San Severino were advancing in considerable force by Cotignola and Forlì to attack them§.

* Malipiero, p. 503.—Bembo, Stor. Venit., Lib. iv., fol. 47.

† Diario di Biagio Buonaccorsi, p. 2, who was a coadjutor of the "Ten of Peace and Liberty" during this war. (*Edition, Florence, Giunti*, 1568.)—Fran. Cei, MS., p. 122.—Bembo, Stor. Vinit., fol. 47.

‡ Malavolti, Lib. vi., Parte iii^a.—Biagio Buonaccorsi, Diario, pp. 3, 5.—Bembo, Stor. Vin., Lib. iv., fol. 47, 48.

§ Buonaccorsi Diario, pp. 11, 12.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 251.—Bembo, Lib. iv., fol. 49, 50.

While Paulo Vitelli was actively employed round Pisa this army which had been assembled at the instance of Piero de' Medici penetrated into Tuscany by means of Ramberto Malatesta the petty chief of Sogliano near the Rubicon (on the confines of Urbino and the Casentino) who showed them a passage into that province. The General Bartolommeo d'Alviano pushed rapidly along the centre branch of the Bidente and through the hills and surprised the convent of Camaldoli*; then sending on forged letters to Bibbiena as if from the Decemvirate of War to prepare quarters for a detachment of Paolo Vitelli's horse, suddenly entered that town with Giuliano de' Medici and a hundred men-at-arms, and being speedily followed by the main body of Venetians under Carlo Orsini placed this important conquest in security ere his passage over the mountains was known at Florence†.

Poppi a strong fortress close to Bibbiena was instantly though unsuccessfully attacked, and the alarm in Florence became so great that Paolo Vitelli at the end of October was despatched from the seat of war to defend the Casentino. Other reënforcements soon poured in from the Duke of Milan and Count Rinuccio, but not in time to prevent the Duke of Urbino from crossing the hills and entering Bibbiena where he was in a manner besieged by Vitelli, and so closely that in the beginning of 1499 the Venetians were compelled to assemble an army for his relief under Count Orsino of Pitigliano. This force on arriving at Castel d'Elci, a town belonging to the Duke of Urbino on the Florentine borders, was stopped by the difficulties of snowy mountain passes and A.D. 1499.

* Malipiero gives an original letter from Piero Dolfini General of Camaldoli to his friend Piero Baroci Bishop of Padua with a minute description of the attack on that convent, from the body of which the Venetians were gallantly repulsed by a few monks and laymen with the loss of forty killed and two hundred wounded. (*Archiv. Stor. Ital.*, v. vii., pp. 519, 526.)

† Malipiero, An. Veneti, pp. 516, 519.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iii., p. 89.—Buonaccorsi, Diario, p. 16.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 252.—Bembo, Lib. iv., folio 51.

the presence of so formidable an adversary as Paulo Vitelli who was ready to oppose its passage. Paulo was however a slow and cautious general, and with an enemy in his rear displayed no anxiety to force a battle: Pitigliano retired, and under the plea of sickness Vitelli allowed the Duke of Urbino, who had been wounded at Camaldoli, to depart with Giuliano de' Medici as one of his suite. This first made the Florentines suspect their general's fidelity; they were also doubtful of Louis XII. and not pleased with Lodovico who urged them to peace, while he withdrew his troops on the pretence of self-preservation against France. Internal discord also prevailed more and more in Florence, her finances were low and her neighbours either doubtful friends or open enemies; wherefore negotiations for peace were recommenced under the auspices of Ferrara and with the full concurrence of Lodovico who wished to attach Florence entirely to himself by the restitution of Pisa*.

Venice too had made a secret alliance with France in hostility to Milan and was now not indisposed to disembarrass herself of the costly Pisan war for a more promising object, especially as she was threatened on her northern frontier by Maximilian, and on the side of Greece by the Turkish Sultan. Conditions were finally proposed by the Duke of Ferrara which under certain securities in favour of liberty would if accepted have again restored Pisa to Florentine jurisdiction; but Hercules of Este's award, as generally happens with arbitrators, pleased nobody; Venice withdrew her troops from that city and the Casentino but under protest and would not ratify; Florence murmured at her rebellious town being only half restored; and the Pisans themselves, although left in possession of their citadel, plumply refused the decision resolving to perish sooner than again submit to the Florentines †.

* Malipiero, pp. 525 and 533.—Fran. Cci, Mem. Storiche, pp. 122, 125, MS.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iii., p. 91. —Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 254.—Diario di Buonaccorsi, pp. 17, 19.—Bembo, Lib. iv., folio 51, 52.

† Fr. Cci, p. 129-30, MS.—Giov. Cambi, p. 139.—Diario di Buon-

The latter were not sorry that the Pisans, stimulated by Genoa and other states, refused to receive this treaty; still less so to find that they had even driven the Venetian troops from their walls with the imputation of traitors *; that they had offered themselves to Lodovico or any who would defend them and had been rejected; and were finally abandoned by all. This disposed Florence to prosecute the war with vigour; wherefore Vitelli and Rinuccio were recalled from the Casentino and Arezzo, both being now evacuated by the Venetians, and hostilities vigorously recommenced against Pisa without any attention to the propositions of Lodovico Sforza or Louis XII. who both were urging them with great promises to declare for one or the other party. Cascina was taken on the twenty-sixth of June after about a day's siege, several minor places followed; the investment of Pisa commenced and that city was promised to the Florentines within fifteen days by their too sanguine commanders, for the citizens were brave and numerous, the town full of peasantry, and all for five years accustomed to war †.

On the first of August every disposition was made to batter the walls on the left bank of the Arno near Porta-a-Mare leading towards Leghorn, and at the same time carry the fortress of Stampace which it was believed would give them command of the town and secure its reduction. Already had a wide and easy breach been effected; already had the indefatigable Pisans dug a ditch and raised another wall behind; no danger, no distress, no fatigue abated their ardour or slackened their

accorsi, pp. 19, 20.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 255.—Malipiero, Annali, pp. 537, 538, 551.—Bembo, Lib. iv., folio 54 and 55.

* Malipiero says on the contrary, that they with difficulty allowed them to depart: he however quitted Pisa on the 27th April, 1498 and an order was given for the return of all Venetian troops and subjects within a month on penalty of the confiscation of their property. It might have been in consequence of this that they were finally driven out as traitors; for he admits the abusive expressions. (*Arch. Stor. Ital.*, vol. vii., pp. 551, 552.)

† Fran. Cei, Mem. Stor., MS., pp. 129, 130, 132, 137, 149. — Buonaccorsi, Diario, p. 20.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 255.—Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iv., p. 191.—Bembo, Lib. iv., fol. 51.

efforts: the murderous salvos of artillery struck down the walls and citizens but not their courage; the men were brave, the women and children braver; not a female hand abandoned the spade or the shovel, not a child its work, until carried off by the enemy's bullets: two sisters were working hand in hand; one was killed by a shot from the enemy's battery; the other, after imprinting a farewell kiss on the pallid lips of her companion quietly took up the mangled remains and depositing them in the very gabion they had both been filling dropped a tear on the corpse and covered it up for ever. Nor was this the only instance of female courage: in a garrison, consisting, citizens and all, of less than four thousand men female devotion was conspicuous and almost all the intrenchments were constructed by them alone *.

Vitelli tried unsuccessfully to mount some heavy guns on the tower of Stampace which he took by assault, but though commanding the town it was too much shaken to bear them, and with more than the Italian caution of that day he continued to batter until from fifty to sixty feet of the wall had fallen outwards in large flat masses and formed an easy ascent to the town. In an instant the nearest troops were on the breach, a hot assault commenced and an universal spirit of hope and courage animated every heart; multitudes of young Florentine gentlemen who had been voluntarily serving with the troops now led them gallantly on; the conflict was fierce and obstinate and Pisa would have fallen that day had not Vitelli and his brother Vitellozzo, against all entreaties, actually beaten the soldiers back with their swords, crying out "*Retreat, retreat,*" "*Back, back,*" and thus in despite of the Florentine commissaries, actually forced their indignant soldiers from the breach! The sudden fall of so wide a space of rampart had spread terror through the city, for there was no

* Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iii., p. 98.—Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iv., p. 207.—Fran. Cei, p. 140, MS.—La Guerra del 1500. Scrittore Anonimo, vol. vi., Parte ii^a.—Ar. Stor. Ital., from p. 361 to 383.

time to repair the breach, and Gambacorta with a few followers had already fled towards Lucca. At this moment the women, with a courage inspired by terror of what was worse than death, flung themselves before their brothers and their husbands, implored them to choose death before slavery and dishonour, urged them once more to defend the breach, and finally succeeded in giving fresh spirit to the citizens! But all this would have been vain had not the assailants been called off: as it was, female resolution, a relaxation of the attack, and three hundred fresh men from Lucca restored the day and gave them some years more of sweet though suffering liberty. Amongst the Florentines the rest of that day was spent in murmurs, anger, and unmodified reproaches against their general while the Pisan men, women, and children worked indefatigably, and with such effect that the next day's dawn beheld the breach once more in security. Suspicions of Vitelli strengthened and accumulated and were soon after confirmed by papers taken at Milan and communicated by the French authorities to the Florentine ambassadors which showed a secret intelligence between Lodovico Sforza and Paulo Vitelli, the latter engaging to procrastinate this war in order that Florence through mere impatience might unite with him in common defence against the French monarch. Little was accomplished after this signal instance of unreasonable military prudence or double dealing: Florence became gloomy and suspicious, the soldiers sullen and disheartened, and the sudden appearance of a deadly marsh fever in all its virulence so reduced the army in the short space of two days that the siege was raised and the troops retired sick and discontented to Cascina*.

The Florentine Seignory like that of Venice when once imbued with suspicion were seldom quieted without blood: Paolo Vitelli had allowed both the Duke of Urbino and Giu-

* Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 257.—Fran. Cei, MS., p. 141, 152.—Corio, Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iv., p. 210.—Ist. Milan., Parte vii., fol. 492.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iii., pp. 98-9.—

liano de' Medici to escape from Bibbiena; he had ever avoided communicating with the commissaries of the republic; he had received secret ambassadors from the Pisans and made no communication of their mission; he was suspected of having secret intelligence with the Medici; he had negligently lost the whole besieging train of artillery; and he had aggravated all these suspicions of his fidelity by almost refusing to take Pisa when that city was actually in his hands. His cup was full. Wherefore Antonio Canigiani and Braccio Martelli were despatched to Cascina with orders to bring him and his brother Vitellozzo prisoners to Florence: Vitellozzo, who was ill in bed, on hearing of his brother's arrest jumped up and mounting a fleet horse escaped to Pisa where he was joyfully welcomed. Paolo was escorted to Florence and the same night most rigorously examined by torture but without extracting a single condemnatory word either of himself or others; yet on the next day, the first of October, he was beheaded in the gallery of the palace! Paulo Vitelli's death was legally unjust because a culprit's confession of his own delinquency was required by law; for even torture, the great substitute for evidence failed in this instance: and it was impolitic, because he left powerful brothers and other staunch adherents to revenge his death *. Thus terminated the campaign against Pisa with little credit to Florence, and moreover in consequence of her indecision she was compelled to make worse terms with Louis XII. who had all this time been marching with rapid strides to the conquest of Milan. The Venetian troops had been withdrawn from Pisa principally because Venice had agreed to assist France against that state for a stipulated price, but Lodovico and the King of Naples excited the Turks against both, and the latter monarch promised the Duke of Milan assistance

* Malipiero, An. Ven., p. 566.—Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iv., p. 213.—Biagio Buonaccorsi, Diario, p. 25.—Ammirato, Lib. xxvii., p. 257.—Giov. Cambi, p. 144.—Portovenere, Memoriale, vol. vi., Parte ii., p. 349, Ar. Stor. Ital.—Corio, Parte vii., fol. 492.

which in the exhausted state of his dominions he was subsequently unable to afford. The pope also gave him hopes of succour as he had lately done to the Florentines, but nothing more; for he was secretly advancing his own and his sons' interests at the court of France where with the power of conferring great favours he was almost sure of success. Spain kept aloof, and Florence played an irresolute, neutral, and losing game while in full activity against the stubborn Pisans. Lodovico's father-in-law Duke Hercules of Ferrara was fearful of committing himself with France and Venice, and Maximilian while he abounded in promises exhausted his slender means in a bloody, cruel, and unsuccessful war against the Swiss. Thus thrown on his own resources Lodovico displayed much energy; he recommended his generals to avoid any decisive encounter; to hold the strong places, and endeavour to lengthen out the war. San Severino, whose fidelity was suspected, made no movement against the French army which under Giovan-Giacomo Trivulzio a Milanese exile of high family, entered Piedmont in the middle of August with about twenty-three-thousand men of all arms, while the king remained at Lyon to direct their movement and supplies *.

Trivulzio put the garrison of Annoni his first conquest, to the sword, then spread his army rapidly over all Piedmont and beyond the Po, took Alexandria by the bad conduct of San Severino, Tortona and other towns successively fell, and he thus marched from conquest to conquest until the dreaded gleam of the French lances flashed upon the towers of Milan. Lodovico was not popular, his nephew's fate hung heavy on the public mind; every hour's advance of the enemy gave new hopes and new expectations to the multitude: no government was in those days so well administered that a large portion of the people were not eager for change, and the Duke of Milan although generally a just ruler, was not spared; he soon felt his dominions

* Fran. Cei, MS., p. 135.—Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iv., p. 192.

crumble beneath him and at last fled into Germany, leaving a garrison of three thousand men in the citadel under Bernardino di Corte whom he vainly expected would be faithful. Trivulzio overran the Milanese dominions in about twenty days and Louis rejoined him in the capital amidst the shouts of a population who though tired of Lodovico had never beheld the face of an enemy during the whole period of his reign. In a few days Bernardino surrendered the citadel for a large bribe, but was shunned and insulted even by the very seducers themselves and died of vexation a short time afterwards *.

Louis XII. received ambassadors at Milan from every state of Italy except Naples; those of Florence coldly, the rest graciously, but extracting money from all. There was a general prejudice against the Florentines on account of Paulo Vitelli's execution, for he had been well known and liked by the French officers, strong sentiments of admiration and sympathy still existed for the Pisans, increased too by their gallant and unrelaxing resistance: Francesco Gualterotti, Lorenzo Lenzi, Alamanno Salviati, and Francesco Guicciardini, (a doctor of laws, says Nardi, very young but of vast promise) were the ambassadors: they had great difficulties, but Louis soon put aside empty quarrels for real utility and on the twelfth of October agreed to receive Florence under his protection and defend her against all enemies with six hundred lances and four thousand infantry: for this she engaged to defend his Italian dominions with four hundred men-at-arms and three thousand infantry: Louis was to assist her with his whole

* Bembo, Lib. iv., fol. 56, 57.—Guicciardini, Lib. iv, cap. iv., p. 202.—Muratori, Annali.—Sismondi, vol. ix., p. 241.—Jacopo Nardi, Lib. iii., p. 104.—Gio. Andrea Prato, Storia di Milano, vol. iii., p. 222, Ar. Stor. Ital.—Corio, Parte vii., folio 493, et seq.—Malipiero gives a curious dialogue beween Lodovico and his brother Ascanio about the line of conduct most conducive to his own interest on the French invasion. The cardinal advised him to conciliate the people by acknowledging his nephew's infant son for the moment; but Lodovico's jealousy and suspicion of all, even to his own brother, prevented his taking any advice. (*Arch. Stor. Ital.*, vol. vii., pp. 561, 2.)

force, or a part according to circumstances, in the recovery of Pisa, after which about 80,000 florins were to be paid to the king in various ways besides an auxiliary force of five hundred men-at-arms being sent with him to the conquest of Naples *.

The difficulties of this convention were multiplied in the hands of Gian-Giacopo Trivulzio who aspiring to the lordship of Pisa advanced every possible impediment to its satisfactory conclusion. With a severe aspect and severer language he rated both embassies for their attachment to Sforza; as well Cosimo de' Pazzi Bishop of Arezzo and Pietro Soderini, who accompanied Louis to Milan, as the new ambassadors who had just arrived from Florence and to which mission it is probable that Guicciardini then about eighteen years of age was attached in a subordinate capacity. After many reproaches Trivulzio finished by tearing the treaty of Lyon before their face instead of ratifying it as they were led to expect, declaring that fear alone and not good will to France had induced them to sign it †.

Nor was Trivulzio incorrect in his estimate; for when at Savonarola's death the ducal party gained the ascendant they endeavoured with Lodovico's aid and heedless of France to share the government amongst themselves; whereupon they resolved that in the distribution of external offices, (now greatly reduced by the loss of Pisa,) favour should be extended to the poorer citizens who were loudly complaining of distress in consequence of exclusion from public employment. But in this attempt to gain partisans Savonarola's political wisdom became apparent; for though the interest of the poorer citizens was by no means neglected, it was yet made subservient to public good and personal efficiency by the majority of independent citizens in

* Malipiero adds forty thousand more of annual tribute. (*Annali*, p. 567).—Gio. Cambi, pp. 144-5.—Baigio Buonaccorsi, Diario, p. 26.—Documenti di Storia Italiana, vol. i°, p. 32.—Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iv., p. 216.—Jacopo Nardi, Stor., Lib. iii., p. 106.

† Gio. Cambi, p. 145.—Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, pp. 57-67.—Documenti di Storia Italiana, p. 35 and note.

the great council, and not to the exclusive benefit of individuals. Nevertheless to give them a more equal chance and apparently by the influence of the ducal party, a decree passed for the distribution of all offices under six hundred lire a year by lot instead of election. But the prepotency of this faction almost ceased after Louis the Twelfth's accession, because it was expected that his government would be firmer and wiser than that of Charles as well as more favourable to Florence, and thence a greater chance was promised of ultimately recovering her lost possessions. This opinion strengthened the French party or Frateschi but was sharply opposed by their rivals, who insisted on the new king's weakness and the prospect of receiving nothing from his alliance except repeated and insatiable demands for money, while from Milan instant and powerful succours against Pisa might be expected, and the more effectual because of Lodovico's recent dissatisfaction with the Venetians who were eager to gain that city.

The Italian league against Charles VIII. had vainly attempted to gain over Florence who had always played an equivocal part through fear of losing that monarch's protection and thus leaving herself at their mercy; but the accession of Louis XII. and his known hatred of Lodovico broke every tie and generated new views, new fears, and new interests in the political intrigues of Italy. Alexander VI. seeing the hopelessness of expecting that the league could ever give his son that dominion in Tuscany to which he at one time aspired, turned shortly towards Louis with the expectation of securing something through his aid in Lombardy, Naples, or Romagna. The tottering state of the league warned King Frederic, and the Duke of Milan no less fearful, would have reconciled himself with Venice; but that wily republic coupling her anger and aggrandizement, unhesitatingly offered Louis every assistance at a certain price to achieve the conquest of Milan. Lodovico in great perplexity implored Florence to use every

effort for his reconciliation with France: this was strongly advocated by his friends and as vehemently opposed by the French party who deprecated the risking of Louis's favour by so false a step. The neutral party in the great council took a middle course and instructed their envoys only to advocate Lodovico's cause if it could be done without prejudice to Florence. Louis would listen to no terms with the Duke of Milan, but insisted on an explicit declaration from the Florentines of friendship to him and his allies and enmity to his foes. The Florentines refused to be friends with the Venetians who were unjustly retaining possession of Pisa, and warned the king of their selfish projects, their general enmity to France, and their characteristic treachery; on this Louis demanded the possession of Pisa in charge for the Florentines, and a long-continued negotiation on the subject terminated by Venice declining to relinquish her hold on that city*. The Florentines being divided amongst themselves, after much discussion and delay and according to the advice of their ambassadors decided on trusting to nobody, for no certainty was anywhere visible. Still as the invasion drew near the difficulty of declaring themselves increased and the choice of evils perplexed them; French treachery had been too keenly felt and Lodovico's conduct had given no claim to their confidence; yet his aid was near, sure, and prompt; that of France distant and uncertain: but Louis was far more formidable, and the mercantile relations between France and Florence a serious obstacle to any quarrel: not so much to the former because she did not depend on them; nor were commercial interests then sufficiently understood or appreciated in the French court to have great influence on its ambition; but to the latter because her welfare went hand in hand with her trade, and she always had an immense amount of capital employed in that country. The reasoning of those in favour of the French alliance would probably have succeeded

* Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iii., p. 159. — Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, pp. 5[illegible]

with the phalanx of well-meaning citizens which formed the really wholesome strength of the great council, had they not known the self-interested views of the movers and the slender confidence that could be placed in them; and although aware of the danger incurred by a weak state in taking a neutral position between the powerful, it was still considered that the success of either party as allies would be equally perilous to Florence: because injuries were in general sooner repaid than benefits: gratitude attaching itself rather to the loser, vengeance more commonly to the winner; and both in this instance were mistrusted. If the power against whom they sided were victorious, vengeance might be expected; if their ally conquered, he would be grateful to his adherents alone, not to the community; and thus give them such influence as by his aid would endanger public liberty. For these and other reasons a strict neutrality was decreed and a future agreement with the victor trusted to, in order that the convention however onerous should be made with the commonwealth at large, not with a faction, and therefore prove more secure and respectable.

This reasoning might have been judicious, but it was carried into effect with a series of equivocal timid flimsy excuses to the two potentates that irritated both and deceived neither; and the French beginning their successful march on Milan alarmed the Florentine ambassadors so much that in the absence of all instructions they hastily concluded the very treaty at Lyon which Trivulzio scattered before their faces at Milan *.

The pope acted more cunningly and successfully, for he had something to dispose of and made the most of his commodity: disappointed by King Frederic's refusal, in his object of uniting Cæsar Borgia to the royal house of Naples, but still aspiring to no less than that kingdom, he again attempted through Louis XII. to accomplish this prince's marriage with Carlotta another Neapolitan princess who had been left by Frederic at

* Jacopo Pitti, Lib. i°, pp. 57-67.

the French court. Borgia with extraordinary talents and unbounded ambition had renounced all ecclesiastical trammels and proceeded to Paris bearing Alexander's consent to the long-sought divorce of Louis, and his marriage with Charles VIII.'s widow the Duchess of Brittany. In return for this the pontiff was to be assisted in subduing all Romagna, nominally to its legitimate ecclesiastical obedience, but really as a principality for Cæsar Borgia whom Louis had already created Duke of Valentinois with a considerable revenue; and on the positive refusal of Carlotta, had married him to the daughter of Jean or Alain d' Albret King of Navarre so as to attach him and Pope Alexander entirely to the interests of France *.

Such was the political state of Italy at the end of the fifteenth century: a powerful transalpine nation had established itself in the heart of her richest provinces; future wars and conquest lowered in the distance; calamity hung darkly over her; the cupidity of an insatiate and formidable rival was already awakened; her future master was on the brink of his nativity; her fairest provinces were to be made the arena for foreign gladiators, and a long line of misfortunes was preparing with the ruin of her social condition and national independence. A new state of things was to succeed; distant and strange nations were to be drawn into contact or collision; new interests, new policy, even new worlds combined in the disruption of ancient institutions, in breaking down the middle ages, and finally melting the great mass of European communities into the more simple elements and grander forms of modern history.

CONTEMPORARY MONARCHS.—France: Charles VIII. until 1498; then Louis XII.—Naples: Ferdinand II. until 1496; then Frederic III.—The rest unaltered.—Vasco de Gama doubled the Cape of Good Hope in 1498.

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* Guicciardini, Lib. iv., cap. iii., p. 155. and cap. iv., p. 189.—Muratori, Annali.

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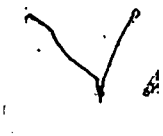

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